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Yemeni president accepts government's resignation

SANAA (R) — Yemeni Prime Minister Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani on Monday presented the government's resignation to President Ali Abdullah Saleh after the country's first general elections since a 1994 civil war, a Yemeni official said. "The government has resigned and the president received the prime minister this morning who presented the resignation," he said. "The president thanked the government, accepted the resignation and assigned the government to continue managing the country's affairs until the formation of the new government." A new government is expected to be named after the first session of the newly-elected parliament on May 18. The president said last week his ruling General People's Congress would run the country alone after its landslide victory in the April 27 polls.

Jordan Times

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King, U.S. envoy discuss efforts to reactivate stalled peace talks

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday met with special envoy Dennis Ross and reviewed with him the three-month-old stalled peace process and U.S. efforts to restart peace talks.

Mr. Ross briefed His Majesty on his recent shuttle between Tel Aviv and the Palestinian self-rule areas and his meetings with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Ross, who arrived here from Israel, told reporters following his meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali that his mission in Jordan was aimed at "consulting with Jordanians about how best to put the peace process back on track."

Mr. Ross, who met Saturday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El Sheikh, said that his talks with Jordanian officials focused on "bilateral U.S.-Jordanian ties and areas where we want to be working together and areas where the United States can be helpful to Jordan." He added: "We had a very good discussion on both sets of issues and I am very pleased."

Mr. Ross said that the U.S. wants the Kingdom to continue playing a role in order to help break the political deadlock noting that "Jordan is strongly committed to the peace process and will always be supportive of any effort to find ways to put things back on track. At one level, merely being able to consult is a help to us."

The Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said that during Mr. Ross' meeting with Dr. Majali, the American envoy briefed the premier on his



His Majesty King Hussein upon meeting United States Middle East special envoy Dennis Ross on Monday (photo by Yousef 'Allan)

efforts to reach a breakthrough for peace and ways to "bridge the differences which have hindered the resumption of the peace process."

Dr. Mutawi added that Mr. Ross urged Jordan to "continue its efforts with our brothers in the Palestinian National Authority and with the Israeli government... and wished that Jordan continues its efforts with both sides."

Last month, Mr. Ross failed in a similar trip to the region to bring the Palestinians and Israelis back to negotiations.

The Palestinians insisted that Israel should put on hold all settlement building plans and to halt construction work of a Jewish settlement in Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem.

The right-wing Israeli government rejected the

request and demanded a Palestinian undertaking to crack down on Palestinian factions who oppose peace talks with Israel.

Mr. Ross who was due to return to Israel on Monday after a lunch meeting with His Majesty, declared that despite setbacks in the peace process, "peace is still alive."

"What I believe is, based on the discussions that I have had, and with the understanding on what I just said, about the reality being that there is no acceptable alternative to the pursuit of peace... its ultimate achievement is something that makes it very clear that the peace process is alive," Mr. Ross said following his 90-minute meeting with Dr. Majali.

He denied accusations by PNA officials that the U.S. was biased towards Israel

and that it was maintaining pressure on the PNA to give more concessions to the Israelis.

"You know I work on behalf of the president and the secretary of state reflecting the commitments that they have (made) and the priorities they have to the pursuit of Middle East peace. I have always found in my discussion with the Palestinians a great deal of hospitality and they have consistently welcomed my efforts. And we are working very hard to try to put this process back on track."

During his meeting with Dr. Majali, the prime minister stressed the "importance of the U.S. role as a full partner in the peace process to help all parties overcome obstacles... and the necessity to achieve a comprehensive and just peace," Jordan News Agency, Petra said.

Netanyahu is proud he approved settlement building in Jerusalem

TEL AVIV (R) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday it would "take some time" before a U.S. envoy would get Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to talk peace again.

The Israeli premier also said he was proud of his decision that sent bulldozers to carve out a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, plunging peace-making between the sides into deep crisis.

"I'm proud that I approved the building in Jerusalem which clarified to the entire world our commitment to the unity of the city," Mr. Netanyahu told Israeli Radio.

He dismissed the idea the settlement stopped peace-making.

"No process was stopped. If that stopped the process, there is no process," Mr. Netanyahu said.

He said difficulties had risen because final status matters like the fate of Jerusalem and the nature of the permanent Palestinian political entity were next up for negotiation.

Mr. Netanyahu said Jerusalem can never be divided and he opposes the Palestinian goal of a sovereign state.

PNA and Western officials said envoy Dennis Ross was trying to arrange a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to discuss the issues that led to the two-month-old freeze in negotiations.

Talks are also stuck over Israel's demand for a PNA crackdown on "terrorism." Mr. Netanyahu said, concerning the progress of Mr. Ross' second mission in a month, "Well, I think that this is going to take some time. It's not happening overnight."

Western officials said ahead of Mr. Ross' meeting Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Sunday night

that he was seeking a response on whether Palestinians would meet the Israelis.

A Palestinian official who declined to be identified said the U.S. envoy had suggested a meeting "to probe" issues that led to the crisis, emphasizing such talks would not be negotiations.

Mr. Arafat spoke to reporters with Mr. Ross after their talks in the West Bank self-rule enclave of Ramallah.

"We are continuing the discussions of the issue from all aspects. No decisions have been reached. We're going to continue the discussions," Mr. Arafat said.

Mr. Ross said: "I'd say we're working hard at it but we still have a lot of hard work to do."

Palestinian officials said the PNA was willing to meet the Israelis on condition the talks tackled the issues of Jewish settlements in Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and only after receiving U.S. guarantees the meeting would lead to a halt in settlement activities.

But Israeli said the meeting would have a different agenda — not including Jewish settlement of occupied land.

Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel said his side would raise "fighting terror and Palestinian violations to the agreement," Mr. Fogel said there would be no halt to settlements.

Palestinians see Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including Jerusalem as pre-empting the outcome of final peace negotiations which have yet to take place.

Since 1967, more than 130,000 Israelis have settled amidst nearly two million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Weizman says tried but failed restart talks

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman said on Monday his efforts to break the ice in deadlocked peace talks with the Palestinians had not produced results.

"I see myself as the ice-breaker. I opened the channel and the envoy needed to follow it... but the envoy did not follow it," Mr. Weizman told Israel Television.

Mr. Weizman, whose position is primarily ceremonial, met last Tuesday with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in an effort to overcome the two-month impasse in talks.

"The ships are not standing today and equipping themselves in order to move forward," Mr. Weizman said.

Asked why, the president responded: "I'll tell you, because we've reached the eve of the talks on the final status and we've always known this would be the most difficult question."

The final status talks, which according to a framework peace deal are to end by mid-1999, have yet to resume under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who took office last June.

"More desire is needed, a lot more desire and a lot more understanding. I opened the channel, I hope. Anyone who wants can travel down it and who ever doesn't want to, please," Mr. Weizman said.

Norway, Egypt in talks over Mideast peace

CAIRO (AP) — Norway's foreign minister, beginning a series of talks with Middle East leaders, met President Hosni Mubarak Monday to explore ways to resume Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Norway played a key mediating role in negotiating the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accords. It has since continued to play a low-key mediating role between the two sides while becoming a main source of economic aid to the Palestinians.

Bjorn Tore Godal, the Norwegian foreign minister, arrived in Egypt Sunday and was due to travel to Syria later Monday. He will also visit Israel and Palestinian self-rule areas.

He told reporters after his talks with Mr. Mubarak that Egypt and Norway might

contribute to what he called some of the measures to be taken shortly to resume Middle East peace talks.

"But I am not very optimistic... It will take a huge effort to return the peace process to its original course," he said.

"The alternative... will be bloodshed and more conflict."

Talks between Palestinians and Israelis have been stalled since March, when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government decided to build a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, the part of the Holy City which Palestinians want as a capital of a future state.

The Israeli move angered the Arabs, who blame right-wing Netanyahu for the impasse in peace talks.

King, Prince discuss defence issues with U.S. commander

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday received at Raghadan Palace Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Central Command Lieutenant General Binford Peay and discussed with him scopes of cooperation particularly in the fields of defence and other issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Abdul Salam Majali, Commander of the Special Armed

Forces Prince Abdullah, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Director of the National Security Council Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Marei Kaabneh and the U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Wesley Egan. King Hussein conferred upon General Peay the First Order Medal of the First Order. Later on, Gen. Peay left Amman after a two-day official visit during which he met with senior Jordanian officials.

Officer shot dead by armed group

AMMAN (J.T.) — An army officer was shot and killed early Monday during a clash with a group of Arab nationalists "suspected to have entered the Kingdom illegally," the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported Monday.

"At 3:30 a.m. Monday while a Jordanian Armed Forces unit was conducting an official search at a house in the Mafraq Governorate following information about a group from an Arab country that had entered the Kingdom illegally, a man came out of the house firing on the unit while trying to escape," Petra quoted an army spokesman as saying.

The report, which did not identify the nationality of the group, said Captain Yousef Daradkeh, 31, was killed during the encounter.

The spokesman said that 13 persons, including the man who fired at Daradkeh, were arrested and investigations were underway.

The Jordan Times was unable to obtain further information on the report Monday.

Senate hears Cabinet's report on water, peace

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Monday heard a briefing from Foreign Minister Fawaz Tarawneh and Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin about the latest political situation in the Middle East and last Thursday's agreement between Jordan and Israel on implementing the 1994 peace treaty clause on water.

Emerging from the meeting, Dr. Tarawneh said: "We have discussed many aspects of the current Jordanian diplomatic efforts and the Kingdom's political stand in support of the Arab nation's drive towards comprehensive peace and we also discussed our diplomatic offensive abroad."

In reply to a question, he said that discussion with the senators also covered the Jordanian Israeli relations "and we explained that Jordan's stand is coordinated with the Egyptian position in a drive to keep the peace process alive."

Jordan's water share as provided for in the peace treaty also came under scrutiny at the

meeting, according to Dr. Haddadin who said: "I have presented a full briefing to the committee about the latest developments in the implementation of the treaty's provisions particularly the water question and the agreement reached last week at a meeting between His Majesty King Hussein and the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu."

At last Thursday's meeting in Aqaba between King Hussein and Mr. Netanyahu, Israel agreed to provide Jordan with an extra 50 million cubic metres of drinking water, in accordance with the peace treaty.

According to Dr. Haddadin, part of the 50 million cubic metres will be supplied immediately and continually over the coming three years, while the remainder will be supplied at a later stage.

Acting senate Speaker Zeid Rifai said after the meeting that the senate gives its full backing to government's policies and King Hussein's relentless efforts to achieve solidarity among Arab countries.

Hizbollah attacks Israel outpost

SIDON (AP) — At least two Lebanese guerrillas were killed Monday when they attacked a post in southern Lebanon that was manned by an Israeli-backed militia.

The Israeli army said that one Israeli soldier and four south Lebanon army militiamen were wounded in fighting in the area. Lebanese guerrillas attacked outposts in southern Lebanon on Monday, wounding an Israeli soldier and four Israeli-allied militiamen, security officials said.

An hour later, Israel retaliated by sending warplanes to attack suspected guerrilla positions in the south.

Two planes and two helicopters fired eight air-to-surface missiles on the highlands of Iqlim Al Tuffah, a stronghold of the Hizbollah guerrilla group, said the Lebanese officials, who spoke on customary anonymity.

Iqlim Al Tuffah, or "Apple Province," 20 kilometres southeast of Sidon, provincial capital of southern Lebanon.

(Continued on page 2)

U.S. ambassador complains to Israel on spying — Time

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk has complained to the Israeli government about its overzealous intelligence agents, Time magazine says in its issue published Monday.

Mr. Indyk spoke privately last year to the Israeli government about agents who followed U.S. embassy employees in Tel Aviv or searched the hotel rooms of visiting U.S. officials, Time quotes U.S. intelligence officials as saying.

The report follows Attorney General Janet Reno's admission Thursday that an FBI investigation was under way to determine whether a high-level U.S. official had been transmitting classified information to Israel.

The Washington Post reported last week on an intercepted telephone call between an Israeli agent here and his superior in Tel Aviv, who discussed the U.S. official, code-named "Mega." The telephone call intercepted by the national security agency is the only evidence the FBI has of an Israeli "mole," or spy within the U.S. government. But Time says

the FBI has "grumbled privately that Israeli agents routinely prowled California's Silicon Valley and Boston's Route 128 corridor for high-tech secrets," referring to areas with a concentration of computer companies.

The CIA last year identified Israel as one of six foreign countries with a government-directed or orchestrated clandestine effort to collect U.S. economic secrets.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his cabinet Friday that the "Mega" allegations were a "fabrication."

"Israel is not using agents in the United States and the article that was published on this subject is fabricated," Mr. Netanyahu said, according to a release from his office.

One U.S. official with knowledge of the investigation said that if a senior U.S. official were passing sensitive information to the Israelis it could prove more serious than the espionage case involving former U.S. Navy analyst Jonathan Jay Pollard, who was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in 1986 for spying for Israel.



THE FACE OF THE FUTURE
MEC Middle East Complex

Netanyahu keeps justice minister, aide

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided against sacking his justice minister over a corruption scandal that will go to the high court this week.

"The prime minister has decided after weighing the various aspects of this affair to leave Tzachi Hanegbi in his post," said a Justice Ministry spokeswoman Sunday.

Mr. Netanyahu later told Israel Radio he had decided that both Mr. Hanegbi and the director general of the

prime minister's office, Avigdor Lieberman, would remain in their positions.

State prosecutors said after a police probe last month there were "real suspicions" of corruption and breach of trust by Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Hanegbi in the short-lived appointment of an attorney-general in January.

But they did not indict the two, citing lack of evidence. They recommended Mr. Lieberman be investigated further.

A Channel One television

report spurred the inquiry into the appointment of Roni Bar-On in January. It alleged key coalition member Aryeh Deri pressed Mr. Netanyahu to appoint Mr. Bar-On, who would offer him a plea bargain in an ongoing corruption trial.

Mr. Bar-On quit 12 hours after taking office amid a public outcry that he was unqualified for the job.

"I think... the justice minister, like me, certainly made several mistakes in this area and I think he's learned a lesson, at least

he's told me he's learned a lesson," Mr. Netanyahu told the radio, explaining his decision.

Mr. Netanyahu said Mr. Lieberman will remain "as long as he wants to continue in the post."

The radio spokeswoman said Mr. Netanyahu's decision not to sack Mr. Hanegbi was contained in a written state response to petitions asking the High Court to order indictments against Mr. Netanyahu, Mr. Hanegbi and Mr. Lieberman.

The petitions will be

heard in court Wednesday.

The results of the three-month police probe prompted members of Mr. Netanyahu's own government to call for Mr. Hanegbi's dismissal.

Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky said last month he would take his party's seven seats out of the coalition, denying Mr. Netanyahu his 66-54 parliamentary majority, if unspecified changes were not made in the government.

Iran quake destroys not just lives but ancient heritage

ZOHAN (AP) —

This ancient Iranian village is mourning the loss of not only its loved ones but also a prized landmark — a 700-year-old mosque that was the envy of surrounding hamlets.

For generations, the Jammeh Mosque stood 35 metres tall on a river bank, withstanding floods, storms and snow. But after an earthquake flattened a swath of northeastern Iran Saturday, all that is left of the twin-minaret mosque built of baked mud bricks is a mound of broken walls, dome and spires.

Only one wall remains intact, a sad testament to lost heritage.

"One hundred floods could not destroy the mosque but this time the earthquake took its toll," said Hojatoleslam Mushatabah Obadi, the head of a seminary that is linked to the 13th-century mosque.

The seminary survived the devastating quake. Some 65 people from the 300 families who inhabit Zohan died in the quake that struck the mountain villages in northeastern Iran. Twenty-five of the village's children were buried alive under the falling walls of a narrow alley near their school. When the quake struck, a 10-centimetre gash opened up on the mountainside, spouting water for two hours.

In Zohan, like other villages, the victims were women, the elderly and children. The men were in the fields in the beautiful valley, dissected by a winding river and carpeted with the red berries and yellow flowers of barberry shrubs. The Jammeh Mosque and the seminary were responsible for Zohan's reputation for promoting education in a region where most are illiterate. Zohan residents are considered scholarly and urbane.

Perhaps that proud tradition gave sur-

vivors of Zohan the encouragement to start rebuilding their lives quickly.

Their dead — washed then draped in shrouds — were quickly buried in freshly dug mass graves.

After saying condolence prayers in the new, 10-year-old Sahel Al Amr Mosque, residents set up makeshift homes in tents donated by aid workers. On thin mattresses, they laid out blankets to combat the near freezing temperatures that envelop the valley at night.

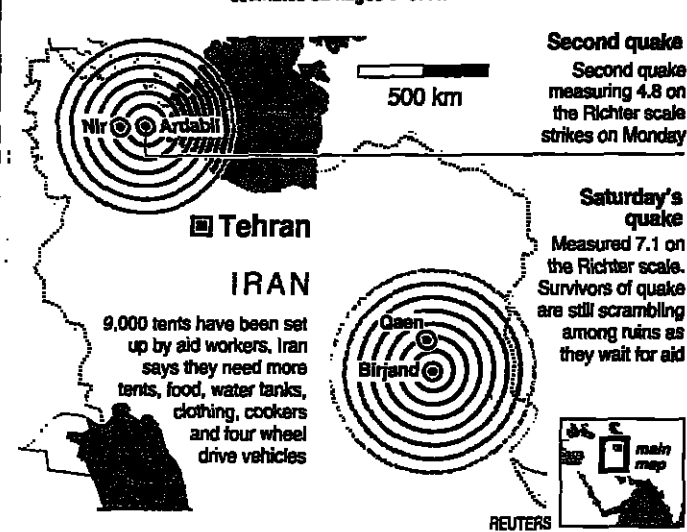
Standing in queues, they collected a ration of flat Iranian bread, tea and sugar, salvaged vegetables and rice from the rubble and cooking gas.

Municipality workers were already surveying the area Monday to look at the possibility of restoring electricity. Children climbed over the rubble, searching for toys and food. Adults broke down upon meeting friends, sharing each other's grief. Their cries were drowned by the roar of helicopters bringing medicine and the rumble of trucks delivering food and water.

IRAN APPEALS FOR AID FOR QUAKE VICTIMS

The Red Cross and Red Crescent organisation is appealing for \$8.2m in international aid for tens of thousands of Iranian earthquake victims needing vital relief supplies.

A second quake struck the country only days after nearly 2,400 people were killed in a powerful earthquake. Some 50,000 people have been displaced and Iran estimates damages of \$77m.



Israeli premier says contacts, progress made with Syria

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that progress had been made on restarting peace talks with Syria.

"There have been contacts through several channels, and there is progress," Mr. Netanyahu said on Israeli public radio on the 49th anniversary of the inception of Israel. "There are indications that the Syrians are interested in restarting negotiations, and we will find out just how serious they are," he added.

Israel's previous Labour government broke off peace talks with Syria after Damascus refused to condemn a slew of Palestinian suicide

bombings in February and March that claimed 58 victims in Israel.

Although the Labour government had agreed in principle to a Syrian condition for peace that Israel return much of the Golan Heights it seized in 1967, the sides had been stuck on military arrangements on the strategic plateau. The negotiations have remained frozen since the election in May last year of the right-wing Netanyahu, who has insisted Israel will not return the Golan Heights.

In addition, Mr. Netanyahu refused to qualify U.S. envoy Dennis Ross' mission this week to the region in a bid to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks a "failure."

Turkish viewers drawn by reality TV shows

ISTANBUL (R) — A preacher molesting a girl to exorcise evil spirits, a doctor touching up a patient, an actor accused on screen of adultery — all are daily fare on Turkish television, where fiction is a poor second to real life drama.

The "reality show" in various guises has been on the rise in many countries, but in Turkey the shows have turned into trials by television for a lynch-mob audience crying out for blood.

"The media is putting itself up as a candidate to rule the state. Having seen itself as the fourth power, after the legislative, executive and the judiciary, it is now beginning to see itself as guardian of the other three as well," independent programme maker Can Dundar told Reuters.

People are "exposed" daily for being pervers, fraudsters, liars or fools, and the public appetite for it seems insatiable.

"The ratings prove this is what the people want. Television appeals to feelings, not logic. Would you honestly prefer to see (Prime Minister Necmettin) Erbakan talking or a mother crying over her child?" Kanal D editor Tuncay Ozkan told Reuters.

"These shows are in the public interest." He said one show found a lawyer in a torture-murder case had been a torturer.

But the shows rarely probe Turkey's shaky rights situation. This not only reflects pressure from the state but also the close level of cooperation with the police in the making of the shows.

After years of attack and destroy tactics, the media has begun to focus on ethics after one show, "Soz Fato'da" (Fato Says), hosted by Tomboy actress Fama Girik, was accused of framing a doctor charged with sexually harassing his patients.

The scandal brewed up after reports that "Soz Fato'da" had secretly taped film of an army doctor harassing a young patient.

The doctor was arrested. Ms. Girik showed the footage, first asking eager viewers whether such pictures should be broadcast.

The same night, the "patient," Sule A., appeared live on rival Show TV news and said she was asked to provoke him.

Things became even murkier when Sule appeared on Ms. Girik's latest show saying she was tricked and bribed by show into framing Ms. Girik. Women were shown saying they were harassed by the doctor but had not expected a legal complaint to do any good.

Much of the furor was blamed on the fact that the man belonged to Turkey's powerful army rather than to any revision over lurid broadcasting.

"Fato finally hit a hard nut. Her victim was a top doctor — more important, a colonel," wrote Yildirim Turkur in the Radikal daily. Mr. Turkur said Ms. Girik and others often used similar methods.

He said a "Soz Fato'da" worker had tricked a religious editor into believing he was a homosexual so

he could secretly film — and publicly reveal — the man making a pass at him.

A news programme, "Arena," showed a secretly-filmed tape of a Muslim preacher tricking a girl into a religious marriage so he could have sex with her. The man later committed suicide.

This was not the only death linked in the media to reality shows. An actress hanged herself after her actor husband was accused on "Soz Fato'da" of adultery.

But there has been no real backlash: "The people... who could be her victim at any moment, love Fato," Mr. Turkur said.

On a typical Wednesday night, you can watch Ms. Girik's offerings and then switch over to see "Last Resort," where another former actress, Hulya Kocyigit, swoons, cries and swaggers through an odyssey of human drama — this week she rescued a disabled man from his "ignorant" family and took him to hospital. Then comes "Prizma," hosted by another actress.

The reality shows and similar programmes are so endemic in Turkish television that it is hard to believe they will go away.

"Ours is a society where people are keen to know what the neighbours are up to — these programmes are popular because they deal with private lives and violence," Mr. Dundar said.

Many news bulletins are refined versions of these shows. World

events, politics or the economy are regularly sidelined so the latest scandal figure can be interviewed live in the studio.

The viewers do not seem squeamish — while flinching at sexuality, they will watch the reconstruction of an incident where a woman beheaded her abusive husband, put the head in the fire, and left a note apologising for the mess.

Hard news stories are also full of blood and guts.

Car crash victims, people ablaze, maimed people are shown, sometimes even before their relatives are informed, and most channels did not shrink from showing footage of police picking up the body pieces of a woman suicide bomber last year.

Sociologists explain the phenomenon as "schadenfreude" and jealousy, born of the poverty and lack of social and political empowerment of a people exposed to untold wealth on TV.

"The alienation of many people in Turkey has made them dangerously insensitive. Alienation and insensitivity can be seen as syndromes of a sado-masochistic culture," media and communications theorist Unsal Oskay told Reuters.

Violence is not confined to the poor. A lack of social and legal justice encourages people, rich and poor, to turn elsewhere, from the media to organised crime, to fill the void.



PALESTINIAN PROTEST: A Palestinian student masked in a kaffeya scarf burns an Israeli flag during a demonstration in the West Bank city of Nablus on Monday. The demonstration was held to coincide with Israel's independence day. Some 1,000 students attended the protest at Nejah university, chanting, "Israel's independence is not ours" (AFP photo)

Hizbollah attacks Israel outpost

(Continued from page 1)

Israeli troops and allied militiamen also fired barrages of 155-mm Howitzer shells at suspected Hizbollah positions in the region, just across from an Israeli-occupied border enclave.

There was no immediate word on casualties from the air attacks or the retaliatory

shelling.

The raids came after guerrillas raked an outpost in the village of Sujod manned by the South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia with rocket and machine-gun fire, wounding four militiamen, the officials said. Israel Radio said three militiamen were wounded.

There was no immediate explanation for the discrepan-

cy in the number of wounded.

In another attack, an Israeli soldier was wounded at the Israeli Rihan outpost, 10 kilometres north of Sujod.

SLA officials in Marjayoun, the main town in the enclave, said at least two guerrillas were killed in the clashes. But a Hizbollah official in Sidon declined to say if there were casualties.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:35 French Programmes
16:00 Super Sports Folies
16:30 Dog House
17:00 Preserving for the Taste of it
17:15 The Album Show
18:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Coach
20:00 Doc. — Tilt
20:30 Encounter
21:10 Doc. — Nature of Things
22:00 News in English
22:25 Snowy River
23:00 Mission Impossible

PRAYER TIMES

04:07 Fajr
05:35 (Sunrise) Duha
12:32 Dhuhur
16:12 Asr
19:28 Maghreb
20:56 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel.

661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel.

622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church

Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel.

771751.

Amman International Church

Tel. 652526

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.

654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.

675691.

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel.

614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology

An unstable heat wave will affect the Kingdom today, so it be hot and partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers and winds southeasterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be hot and dusty, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman 20/35

Aqaba 22/39

Deserts 19/37

Jordan Valley 22/42

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 36, Aqaba 36 Humidi-

ty readings: Amman 18 per

cent, Aqaba 28 per cent.

USEFUL

TELEPHONE

NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Fayer Dabbas 799155

Dr. Mazen Al Nofal 830435

Dr. Fakher Bilbel 552223

Dr. Adnan Zaghoul 898140

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asema pharmacy 637055

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Nabrooch pharmacy 623672

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakr 276852

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Zuhur Al Qadi 906606

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Dept 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Res-

cue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111,

637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department

..... 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Com-

plaints 897467

Amman Municipality Com-

plaints 787111

Telephone Information (direc-

tory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs 623101

'Abdali Telephone Repairs

661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority

815615

Electric Power Company

636361

RJ Flight Information

0853200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-

53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Husseini Medical Centre

813813/32

Khalidi Maternity 644281/6

Akileh Maternity 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity

..... 642362

Melhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Musasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Islamic, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir 775111/26

Army, Marjha 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital

602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart

King instructs PSD to accord special medical treatment, promotion to officer wounded on duty

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday passed directives to the Public Security Department (PSD) to promote police officer Abdul Karim Ghweiri from the rank of second lieutenant to first lieutenant in recognition of his daring performance during an armed robbery in Amman on May 2nd.

Lt. Ghweiri was shot and wounded in the process of apprehending suspected burglars in connection with the shooting of Subhi Haj Hassan, a money changer, and the theft of JD 100,000 as well as unspecified amounts of foreign currency from the latter's exchange office.

The police were said to have chased the assailants, who escaped from the scene in a red Mercedes, and tracked them down at Hashemiyeh Plaza. Three men, two Iraqis and one Jordanian, reported to have been involved in the robbery, were later arrested after a police chase in the downtown area.

Jordan to dispatch relief supplies to Iran

AMMAN (J.T.) — A Jordanian transport plane is slated to leave Amman for Tehran today carrying relief supplies to victims of the earthquake which hit eastern Iran Saturday killing as many as 2,400 people, according to a statement by the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation (JHCO) released Monday.



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday receives President of the Jordan Contractors Association Wael Touqan. The prime minister voiced appreciation for the association's development projects (Petra photo)

Princess discusses accreditation as means of ensuring high standards of education

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Sarvath Monday stated that maintaining high educational standards would ensure Jordan's continued regional edge in terms of skilled and qualified human resources.

strove to attain so hard in "The term 'global village'



HRH Princess Sarvath

Accreditation of universities, she said during a lecture at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), would assure employers of the quality of the education of manpower entering the market.

The issue of accreditation is foremost in the minds of educators in the field of higher education in the Kingdom as "a means of standardisation and quality control of a process which is difficult to assess or qualify," Princess Sarvath asserted, during the lecture delivered to members of the teaching staff at JUST.

of men and women who ...will need a whole different and perhaps novel spectrum of qualities to make a success of their responsibilities.

In addition to technical skills, Princess Sarvath said, today's students will have to have been imbued with a "profound belief in community spirit, humanitarian principles, altruism and tolerance."

She cited the experience of the Amman Baccalaureate School, whose board of trustees she chairs, as an example of a creative endeavour in the field of education which is designed to graduate students capable of meeting the challenges of the modern world.

The Princess described the school as a catalyst of change and one which worked on developing an educational programme which would allow "our students to be firmly rooted in our Arab Islamic heritage and culture while meeting the very highest of international standards."

Italian goods to be displayed in exhibition

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Under the patronage of the Minister of Trade, Industry and Supply Hani Mulki, the Intelligentsia Corporation is hosting an exhibition of Italian equipment and products (IEPE 97) at the Amman International Motor Show from May 14-18.

The Italian economic delegation comprised of 37 businessmen and headed by President of the Jordanian-Italian Industrial Chamber Sergio Marini, will cover aspects of economic relations between Italy and the Arab World, which may lead to a large network of commercial cooperation as well as exchanges of new thoughts and ideas, General Director of Intelligentsia Jamal Naji said.

A counterpart meeting in Amman's Chamber of Commerce will take place between the Italian delegation and Arab and Jordanian economists, according to Mr. Naji.

On Tuesday, a trip to Sahab Industrial City has been organised to demonstrate the Jordanian experience in the industrial field as well as possibilities of joint ventures between the two countries in future, he added.

Later, speeches will be given by Chairman of the Amman Chamber Of Commerce Issa Murad, Chairman of the Amman Chamber of Industry Khalid Abu Hassan, General Manager of Export Development Mohammad Halayka, General Manager of the Investment Promotion Corporation Rema Badran and Italian Ambassador Francesco Cerulli to discuss bilateral economic relations. Mr. Naji concluded.

Discussions are expected to clarify modern technologies which have appeared mainly due to the rapid economic growth in the Middle East, especially after the peace process, Intelligentsia officials said.

include different demonstrations such as textiles, engineering companies operating in the field of industrial plant design, classic furniture, sanitary appliances, shoes, clothes, marble, cars, veneer, aluminium, cooling systems, water filters and more, Mr. Naji explained.

The Ministry of Agriculture and local companies are participating.

The benefits are expected to be translated into immediate deals and facilitating Jordanian investments for Italian agencies, he stated.

Cooperative dimensions are predicted to take a major part in these meetings as well as ways of accelerating and expanding commercial cooperation and the circle of economy.

Participating members include Italian industrialists, economists and agents along with Jordanian and Arab economists and businesspersons.



Shepherd leads flock to drink in badia region of the Kingdom (photo by Amy Henderson)

Ministry to commence public awareness campaigns to minimise water utilisation

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has prepared a programme to increase public awareness regarding domestic water usage and plans to implement such in cooperation with other ministries as well as the media, according to a ministry source.

The campaign is necessary as water utilised during the summer is expected to increase, burdening the country's meagre water resources, he said.

The programme will encourage the public not to waste a single drop of the valuable commodity and adopt practices aimed at minimising consumption, according to the source.

It will also attempt to elucidate the water situation in Jordan, he said.

The campaign will target the public sector and focus on homemakers, the source said, adding that the ministry plans to convene seminars and other activities in the course of the campaign's implementation.

subsequent water demands were increasing.

It stated that an individual's consumption of water averages to a daily 85 litres while the total annual consumption of water in Jordan reaches 550 million cubic metres, according to the source.

He affirmed that the water campaign will be mostly presented on radio and television in Arabic and English.

Other government departments, including the ministries of Awqaf and Islamic affairs and Youth and Culture are slated to participate in the campaign.

Ministry teams will be visiting factories to encourage their adherence to regulations concerning water consumption, while representatives of the ministry, the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) and other departments will be asked to discuss the water situation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Family planning seminar to convene

AMMAN (J.T.) — Official and non-governmental organisations involved in implementing the second phase of a National Jordanian Strategy on Family Planning will participate in a four-day workshop to be held at the Amra Hotel Monday by the National Population Commission (NPC).

Premier to speak at JBA meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali will be guest speaker at a meeting to be organised by the Jordan Businessmen's Association (JBA) on May 17. According to a JBA statement, the premier is expected to discuss economic issues and government plans as well as issues pertaining to the private sector.

Seminar opens with call to graduate qualified nurses

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the Nursing and Midwives Association (NMA) Hashem Salameh Monday stated that rapid population growth obliges nursing schools to license an increased number of qualified graduates.

Addressing the opening session of a workshop entitled "Towards Better Nursing Care," Mr. Salameh noted that seven schools currently graduate nurses and midwives but that more are required that qualified personnel might work in hospitals in the southern regions of Jordan.

Two of the nursing schools are run by the Ministry of Health, two by state universities and two by private universities in addition to a nursing school run by the Jordanian Armed Forces Royal Medical Services, he confirmed.

Highly qualified nursing graduates are employed both in Jordan as well as other Arab countries, he added.

Her Majesty Queen Noor delegated Minister of Social Development Mohammad Mamser to open the meeting, the second of its kind to be held by the nursing association.

The meeting will cover nine reports dealing with various aspects of nursing practices in Jordan, care for cancer patients and legislation governing nursing.

the success of primary health is incumbent on the nursing profession.

Even the work of renowned physicians can only succeed when supported by good nursing, he added.

The minister lauded the efforts of Jordanian nurses in serving their nation.

Head of the NMA Scientific Committee Ahmad Khatib described the meeting, organised in observance of World Nursing Day, as part of a series of activities to promote nursing in Jordan.

Ms. Jamie Majali, wife of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, attended the opening session.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

"James Bond 007" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

LIBYAN FILM FESTIVAL

"The Ambassadors" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 7:00 p.m.

CONCERT

"Musical performance by the orchestra of the National Music Conservatory, at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURE

"The Contribution of Scientific Examination to Archaeological Research" by Dr. Josef Riederer at the Friends of Archaeology Centre, (Tel. 696682) at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

"Exhibition of home furnishing collection by the Salt Handicraft Centre at Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation (Tel. 699141/2), until May 15.

"Works by Paris-based Moroccan artist Najia Mahadji, at Darat Al Fann, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 12. Also showing an exhibition by architectural photographer Said Nusseibah entitled "The Farthest Mosque" and by contemporary Arab artists.

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Russia, Chechenya sign 'historic' peace accord

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin and Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov signed a peace accord Monday, promising an end to 400 years of intermittent conflict between Moscow and the independence-seeking north Caucasus region.

"We have signed a peace deal of historic dimensions, putting a full stop to 400 years of history," Interfax News Agency quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying after the signing ceremony.

"Some kind of war was going on throughout this period and the people felt insecure."

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Mr. Maskhadov as saying: "Today we have ended the 400-year confrontation, regardless of those who wanted the war to continue."

The deal aims to turn last year's ceasefire between Moscow and the separatist region, conquered by Russia in the last century, into a lasting peace.

The truce had halted a 21-

month war in which tens of thousands of people died in an ill-fated Russian military operation to crush Chechenya's independence drive.

The deal included the withdrawal of Russian troops and the deferral of any decision on Chechenya's status until 2001.

"The war is ending, for the first time in the history of relations between Moscow and Grozny, and the era of peace is starting," Mr. Maskhadov said on arrival in Moscow.

The long history of military conflict between Russia and Chechenya includes a bitter war in the 19th century as the Chechens resisted Russia's drive to conquer the north Caucasus.

Soviet dictator Josef Stalin deported the whole Chechen people to Central Asia in 1944, accusing them of collaborating with the invading Nazi troops. They were only allowed to return in the 1950s.

Monday's talks were the first meeting between Mr.

Yeltsin and Mr. Maskhadov since Mr. Maskhadov, a former Soviet colonel who led Chechen military resistance to the Russian forces, was elected Chechen president in January.

He has vowed to fight for full independence for his region, a demand which Moscow rejects out of hand.

Mr. Yeltsin said the accord consisted of only one point, "a peace treaty has been signed. This is the gist of it."

Mr. Yeltsin had said the talks were aimed at declaring "our firm intention never to use force or threaten to use it in relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Ichkeria" — the name favoured by the Chechen separatists.

The meeting took place two days after gunmen kidnapped a Russian television crew in Chechenya, posing a new challenge for the separatist leaders and sowing the atmosphere.

It was the latest in a series

of kidnappings and Russian officials said these, together with two explosions in southern Russia, had complicated the prospects for talks.

Both sides have thrown responsibility for the events on to unspecified "parties of war" which want to wreck the peace process.

"It is within our powers to stop confrontation, conflicts, acts of terrorism and hostage-taking," Interfax quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying. "The Chechen authorities must secure the safety of journalists and other people working in the republic."

He also said all Russian servicemen held by the Chechen side must be released.

Mr. Maskhadov is also expected to meet Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to sign a series of economic accords. Those would open the way for economic aid from Moscow to the region, much of which was destroyed in the Russian military operations.



Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov (left) and Russian President Boris Yeltsin sign an accord in the Kremlin Monday, as members of the Chechen and Russian delegations look on (Reuters photo)

India, Pakistan to free prisoners, set up hotline

KURUMBA, Maldives (R) — The leaders of India and Pakistan Monday agreed to release each others' nationals held in prison and set up a telephone hotline to ease a half-decade of tension.

In the highest level bilateral talks in four years, Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, decided to establish working groups to address all outstanding issues dividing the two South Asian rivals.

The two sides agreed that one of the groups would be devoted to Kashmir, the most contentious issue between the two foes, Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad, told reporters.

During talks which broke down in 1994, New Delhi had balked at bringing the Kashmir issue to the table, while Islamabad had insisted that progress on other issues would depend on India's willingness to discuss the quarrel over the Himalayan region.

Mr. Sharif told a crowded news conference after their 90-minute talk that the two nations' foreign secretaries — the highest ranking civil servants in the foreign min-

istries — would meet in Islamabad, perhaps in June.

Mr. Ahmad said the second round of talks between the foreign secretaries, who met in March, would be devoted to establishing "a comprehensive mechanism to address all outstanding issues between the two countries, and here I emphasise, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir."

India and Pakistan both stake a claim to the divided region, the cause of two of the three wars between the foes since independence in 1947.

Indian police and hospital officials say more than 20,000 people have died in Jammu and Kashmir state since a separatist insurgency erupted in 1990.

Both men appeared positive after their first face-to-face meeting, held on a resort island in the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Maldives.

Mr. Gujral called the meeting with Mr. Sharif "very warm, very friendly," while the Pakistani leader said the talks were very constructive.

"I like the man very much," Mr. Sharif said of his Indian counterpart.

Both sides announced the most important concrete steps since launching the fresh peace talks in March. Before Monday's meeting, the foreign secretaries had met in New Delhi in March, followed by the foreign ministers in April, also in the Indian capital.

"We agreed to a hotline between both of us," Mr. Gujral told the news conference, held in a discotheque next to a bar at the luxury resort on Kurumba Island. The two leaders met on the sidelines of a regional summit.

At their meeting in April, the foreign ministers agreed to release fishermen held in each others' jails. Mr. Gujral and Mr. Sharif expanded the amnesty to all civilian prisoners.

There were no estimates of how many Indian and Pakistani nationals were held in each others' prisons. Mr. Ahmad said neither country is holding any political prisoners from the other nation.

Mr. Ahmad said the hotline will be the first between the two nations' leaders, although there has been a hotline linking the directors-general of military operations of both countries since 1986.

Up to 7 believed dead on Everest

WELLINGTON (R) — Up to seven people are missing, presumed dead, on the north face of Mount Everest, a spokeswoman for a New Zealand expedition on the world's highest peak said Monday.

The climbers, who are believed to have perished in a storm, included three Kazakhs, one German, a Nepali Sherpa and an unidentified climber, Sue Kelly of Adventure Consultants said.

She said the New Zealand expedition leader, Guy Cotter, based on the south side of the mountain, was rung by fellow New Zealander Russell Brice, who is running an expedition on the north side.

"Brice reported five dead and I've since read another expedition's Internet page, which reported seven missing presumed dead," said Ms. Kelly.

She said the missing were all on the north

side of the mountain.

An Internet page run by the Mountain Zone carried excerpts from a satellite call by Everest expedition leader Todd Burleson, made from the Everest base camp.

"We do have some news from the north side — it's not very good. The Kazakhstan party that went up — several of them summited, and five people died on the descent," Mr. Burleson said.

The page carried an editor's note reporting that latest sources suggested seven deaths from the North Face Team Three from Kazakhstan, one from Korea, one from Germany, one Sherpa from Nepal and one other person whose nationality was not known.

The Mountain Zone said the group was caught in a severe storm 200 metres below the summit.

China launches satellite after failures

BEIJING (R) — China Monday successfully fired a domestic telecommunications satellite into orbit in a night launch likely to give a vital boost to the country's space industry after a recent string of high-profile failures.

A Long March 3A rocket fired the Dongfanghong-3 (East Is Red) Communications satellite into orbit just after midnight from the Xichang Launch Centre in

southwestern Sichuan province, a spokeswoman for China Aerospace Corp. said by telephone.

"The rocket launch was entirely successful," the spokeswoman said. "(We) are currently continuing to track the satellite."

International satellite insurers had been waiting for the launch of the Dongfanghong-3, which followed the failure of two ma-

jor launches last year, saying a third loss could further drive up inflated premiums on Chinese launches.

An \$230 million Intelsat 708 satellite was lost in February 1996 after its rocket veered off course and exploded, killing six people.

In August, a U.S.-built domestic communications satellite was stranded in a useless orbit by a Long March 3 rocket.

ANC admits mistakes in anti-apartheid fight

CAPE TOWN (R) — South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) apologised Monday for civilian deaths caused by its war against apartheid, saying some guerrillas had been impetuous, ill-disciplined or badly trained.

President Nelson Mandela's party issued the apology in a statement to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, drafted in response to questions from the commission following an initial presentation in August.

The ANC statement repeated the party's position that its armed struggle against apartheid, launched in 1960, had been a just war and that civilians had never been deliberately targeted.

"(We) certainly had the

capacity to kill many thousands of civilians," the statement said. "This would have been easy to do, but we never took this route."

It referred to several bombings which killed civilians in crowded city streets or bars, and said:

"We regret the deaths and injuries to civilians arising from armed actions. We apologise to the next-of-kin for the suffering and hurt."

It said two such bombings — one at a Durban bar that killed three civilians and wounded about 60, and another outside air force headquarters in central Pretoria — had been mistimed.

"Some recruits had sketchy political understanding of the nature of the struggle... Some were never thoroughly under the discipline

of the ANC... Some attacks occurred because of anger," the statement said.

"At times insufficient training could have resulted in situations in which (guerrillas) were not able to ensure that explosions took place at the intended time."

Mr. Mandela set up the Truth Commission in 1995 as an impartial investigation into crimes and human rights abuses during three decades of race war. The intention was that by revealing the truth of the period, reconciliation would be achieved.

No reliable figures are available on the number of civilians killed by ANC guerrillas but the party listed scores of bomb or gun attacks that claimed civilian casualties during the 1980s. The ANC also responded

to questions by the Truth Commission about the treatment of its own dissidents in exile and about its feud with chief Mangosuthu Buthe's Inkatha Freedom Party.

The statement said those responsible for ill-treatment of ANC prisoners had been disciplined.

The statement described the feud with Inkatha, in which about 15,000 people died between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, in terms of the ANC theory that the party was the target of a "third force" of apartheid-era hit squads.

"The violence was the work of the state, was organised at the highest level and was aimed at strengthening the hand of the government at the negotiations table," the statement said.

Chirac drops in on Cannes as centre-right gains

PARIS (R) — Conservative President Jacques Chirac dropped in on the Cannes Film Festival Sunday to rub shoulders with stars as new polls showed his centre-right gaining strength in a parliamentary election campaign.

The French leader assumed a sharply higher public profile as a second poll in as many days showed the government building on its lead over the left two weeks before the first round vote in the May 25-June 1 snap National Assembly election.

The latest poll, a Sofres survey to appear in Monday's Le Figaro newspaper, showed the government would win between 338 and 370 seats compared to 183-213 seats for the combined left and one to three seats for the far-right National Front.

Sofres found that 41.5 per cent of voters said they would back the combined left in the first round, just a half a point less than in a similar poll conducted a week earlier.

At the same time, 39.5 per cent said they would vote for the combined right, compared to 38 per cent a week earlier. Fourteen per cent said they favoured the

National Front, against 15 per cent in the earlier poll.

But in the second round, many National Front backers would shift to mainstream rightist candidates, putting the centre-right solidly in the lead in terms of assembly seats.

Reflecting the volatility of the race and its apparent failure to catch voters' interest, 31 per cent of those surveyed said they might still change their minds.

Sixty-one per cent said they felt the election outcome would have almost no impact on their lives.

Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin, touring a Paris marketplace in search of votes Sunday, said the polls' ups and downs showed the French people were unhappy with the current government but "a bit afraid of change."

"The worst, after four years of the current majority, would be to keep them for another five years," Mr. Jospin said. "If the French people hope to regain their sense of the future, they must dare to change."

Former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, a member of Mr. Chirac's Gaullist RPR and a one-time close ally of the president, said the gov-

ernment must offer new policies and "a new team" to head off a leftist victory.

Though he did not specifically rule out the current prime minister, it was another blow to Gaullist Alain Juppe, who has come under a steady stream of sniping from political allies over lacklustre leadership of the government's campaign.

Asked in an interview with Le Figaro who should be named premier should the centre-right retain power, Mr. Pasqua responded: "Someone who is determined, who is charismatic and knows how to convince people... There is an embarrassment of choices."

On the far-right, National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen said France would cut off all aid to immigrants should the Front win power, thus "letting them leave" rather than booting them out of the country.

"If they have the means to come here, they will be welcomed as visitors, but if they lack the means, we will offer them neither schooling nor free health care nor a job," he told cheering supporters in Nice, southern France.

Another way to encourage immigrants to leave would

be to offer them loans to help set up businesses back home, he said.

Communist Party leader Robert Hue tried to smooth over a growing rift with France's Socialists over post-election plans should a leftist coalition win.

Socialist leader Jospin "would say no to a new wave of austerity to meet the Maastricht Treaty requirements (for European Monetary Union) and would institute a policy of social progress," Mr. Hue said in an article to appear in Monday's edition of the Communist Party newspaper L'Humanite.

"If this condition — no more austerity — were fulfilled, then whatever the words that were used, this would mean a path other than the current policy of heading toward a single European currency," Mr. Hue said.

The Socialists would need the Communists to form a government in case of a victory of the combined left. But the two parties have been sparring over whether the Socialists would agree to Communist ministers in the cabinet or a shift away from a single currency beginning in 1999.

Chirac heads to China to bolster pragmatic relations

PARIS (AFP) — President Jacques Chirac's visit to China this week which will be the first there by a French head of state for 14 years, looks set to bolster bilateral ties, already normalised following the brushing aside of disputes over human rights and Taiwan.

Paris, which no longer conceals its economic ambitions in the potentially vast Chinese market, clearly signalled its new pragmatic approach last month when it withdrew its traditional backing for the annual resolution before the U.N. Human Rights Commission condemning Chinese human rights policy.

Chinese Premier Li Peng hailed the French move as a "perceptive and intelligent decision" on the part of Mr. Chirac.

Relations between France and China deteriorated following the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 1989, when Chinese troops opened fire on unarmed student protesters in Beijing.

The military crackdown, sanctioned by late Chinese patriarch Deng Xiaoping, resulted in hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of deaths.

Between 1992 and 1994, ties were soured following the sale of French frigates to Taiwan — regarded by China as a renegade province

— followed by 60 Mirage 2000-5 fighter planes.

Such controversies have been smoothed over by French diplomats whose current aim is to help French business increase its market share in China by creating a favourable political climate.

In 1994, France's share of the Chinese market was only 1.9 per cent, behind Germany's 5.5 per cent, the United States' eight per cent and Japan's 16.2 per cent, according to official figures.

Although France's tardy entry to the Chinese market is a symptom of protracted political differences, Paris was the first Western capital

to restore diplomatic relations with Beijing at ambassadorial level in 1964, when China became a nuclear power.

Neither the Chinese Cultural Revolution of 1965-1969, nor Deng's introduction of economic reforms, raised France to the level of major investor in the country, and any progress there might have been was abruptly ended by the Tiananmen crackdown.

However, the fall of the Berlin Wall at the end of 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union two years later prompted the French government to resume ties with Beijing.

Roland Dumas, France's Socialist foreign minister, travelled to China early in 1991 during a brief rapprochement which faltered over the sale of French military equipment to Taiwan.

Beijing's wrath was immediate. French companies were promptly excluded from all major projects, the French consulate in Guangdong, southern China, was closed and top-level relations were suspended.

France's misfortune was a godsend to its competitors, especially the Germans and Italians, and damaged ties were not repaired until 1993, following a visit by Jacques Friedmann, special

envoy of then Prime Minister Edouard Balladur.

That rapprochement was firm up in January 1994 with the publication of a joint statement in which France pledged to cease selling arms to Taiwan once it had honoured existing contracts and reaffirmed Beijing's sovereignty over the island.

In return, China once again agreed to accept French investment.

Three months later, in April, Mr. Balladur travelled to China, but had to cut short the visit because dissidents were arrested in Shanghai.

Relations again leapt for-

ward when Li Peng visited France in April 1996 for a trip which clinched a contract for the purchase of 30 Airbus aircraft.

In response, human rights champion Martin Lee, leader of the Hong Kong Democrats, charged that France was more interested in selling Airbus to China than in defending liberties.

Mr. Chirac dropped Hong Kong from his visit to China which begins Thursday and ends next Sunday, after he announced new parliamentary elections in France to be held on May 25 and June 1.

Britain plans new research i Gulf War Syndrome

LONDON (R) — Britz new Labour governm announced plans Sun for more research into (War Syndrome and to i rove the health care of i erans.

Minister for the Arr Forces John Reid promi that the health and wel of ex-servicemen and men would be a top pri ty for the government.

"We have an obligat to investigate sympath ically and thoroughly illness suffered by th who have served t country and to provide the resources necessary treat them," Mr. Reid s in a statement.

"The veterans have ev right to expect us to g urgent attention to th concerns... That is the d of honour that our gove ment owes to those v serve our country," added.

Making good on an el tion promise of a fair-d to Gulf War veterans, I Reid said one of the f measures of the four-po plan would be to invite v erans and their represen tives to meet with him discuss their health pr lems.

The government al planned to extend resear programmes into the cas of the Gulf War Sy drome including investig tions into exposure to ch mical weapons and org nophosphate pesticides.

Veterans claim that ev dence gathered in ti United States supports ti theory that a "cocktail" immunisations to prote them from chemical a biological warfare and pe pesticides may be responsi.

"No stone must be le turned and I have tod authorised an investigat into the consequences fi the health of our servit personnel of the combin tion of vaccines and table they took during the Gu War, so that all possibili are considered," Mr. Rei added.

The government has als asked for a full explanat ion of the scientific basis o which the preventat measures were used durin the Gulf War in 1991 fol lowing Iraq's seizur o Kuwait, and plans to inc rease funding into a med ical assessment program to ensure that all vetera can be seen by doctor quickly.

The Labour Party, which ousted the Conservatives after 18 years in power in a May 1 election, had been critical of the previous government's policy on Gulf War Syndrome, accusing them of lagging behind with research and compensation for veterans.

The Conservative government had been reluctant to recognise Gulf War Syndrome, insisting there was no single cause to explain the illnesses and attributing the ailments, ranging from chronic fatigue and asthma to depression and skin ailments, to the stress of the war.

Veterans welcomed the latest government initiatives and praised them for their quick work.

"It's absolutely great. They have stuck to their election promises. This is going to make a big impact," Tony Flint, spokesman for the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association, told Reuters.

"For the past four years we felt like we were hitting our heads against a brick wall, now that wall has collapsed. We hope the Ministry of Defence (MOD) will take notice of research done in America and carry on from that point," he added.

About 51,000 Britons served in the Gulf War and up to 4,000 veterans and their families have illnesses. Some are restricted to wheelchairs and others say their children have been born with serious birth defects.



A group of French soldiers, surrounded by local children, walk back from a drop zone following a parachute jump outside of Brazzaville Monday. French, Belgian and British forces organised the first joint parachute exercise since their arrival to Congo seven weeks ago (Reuters photo)

Political draw declared for Prodi, opposition in Italy vote

ROME (R) — Political commentators Monday declared a draw for Italy's two main blocs in mayoral elections in which each side scored significant victories, and said the real winner was the hard-left Communist Refoundation Party.

Prime Minister Romano Prodi's centre-left coalition and the centre-right Freedom Alliance both won four of the 10 biggest cities up for grabs in a decisive second-round vote Sunday, while the separatist Northern League took the other two.

Corriere Della Sera newspaper of Milan, Italy's finance capital and a key prize won by the Freedom Alliance, said the draw had ultimately been predictable.

But it added: "There's one sure victor...and like it or not, he's called Fausto Bertinotti."

An electoral pact with Mr. Bertinotti's Communist Refoundation paid off for Turin's outgoing mayor, Valentino Castellani, who had trailed the centre-right badly in the first round.

He won by a handful of votes. But Milan's centre-left candidate, Aldo Fumagalli, refused an electoral pact with the hard-left party and lost to businessman Gabriele Albertini.

"The moral is the same — without Refoundation, it's uphill for the centre-left," Mr. Messaggero said in an editorial.

The Freedom Alliance said the election proved that Mr. Prodi's Olive Tree Coalition was "drying up," but the centre-left was swift to point out that it won three cities, including Trieste in the north, with no backing from the hard-left.

Mr. Prodi relies on Mr. Bertinotti's Communist Refoundation Party for a parliamentary majority but key ideological differences have strained their often testy relationship to its limits.

A mutiny last month by Refoundation over an Italian-led security force for Albania almost felled Mr. Prodi's year-old government and bigger battles lie ahead

over welfare reform. Mr. Bertinotti is insisting social spending cannot be cut.

La Stampa concluded that Mr. Bertinotti had come off best and that "the opinion of the polls was certainly not reassuring for the prospect of a centre-left without Refoundation."

It said Mr. Bertinotti's hand was strengthened since Mr. Prodi would now have to take note of Mr. Bertinotti more than ever, and reckoned Refoundation would seek to make capital out of that influence in a special cross-party parliamentary commission on institutional reforms that is reexamining Italy's outdated constitution.

Commentators said former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's Freedom Alliance could be pleased with its showing but Rome's leftist mayor, who faces his own reelection contest later this year, said Mr. Berlusconi did not give Mr. Prodi the drubbing he had hoped for.

"If the Freedom Alliance, wrongly, was hoping for a message against the government, well I don't think it got one," Francesco Rutelli told La Repubblica newspaper.

But Corriere Della Sera said the fact that the centre-right had a tougher time in the second round run-offs than against the wider first-round field indicated it was still having trouble winning over supporters of the separatist Northern League.

The league, criticised for fomenting the kind of separatist sentiment that led to last week's bizarre occupation by an armed band of the belltower in St. Mark's Square in Venice, lost Milan but won in the northern cities of Lecco and Pordenone.

Mr. Messaggero said those wins proved the league could still attract a protest vote and praised Massimo D'Alema, head of the Reform Commission and of the Democratic Party of the Left, for urging league leader Umberto Bossi to return to negotiations.

"The chase for Umberto, the prodigal son, is on again," it said.

Afghan war to overshadow C. Asian summit

ASHKHBAD (AFP) — The continuing war in Afghanistan will overshadow a summit of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) in Turkmenistan aimed at boosting regional cooperation, diplomats here said.

Created 12 years ago, the ECO brings together 10 Central Asian states for regular talks but has yet to deliver tangible benefits. Regional rivalry between Iran and Turkey as well as the war in Afghanistan have hampered efforts to forge economic and trade links between member states.

"Economics and business will dominate the meetings at the conference but the war in Afghanistan will occupy the hearts," a European diplomat here said.

On Saturday at a meeting with his Tajik counterpart in Dushanbe, Iranian president, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, stressed the importance of a peaceful solution in Afghanistan.

"Peace in the region is the catalyst for fruitful economic cooperation," said Mr. Rafsanjani, who recently has criticised ECO's lack of results. Last month he said he wanted to see some "firm decisions" taken at this week's meeting.

Hopes of finding a common approach to ending the 17-year-old civil war were also expressed by the Tajik foreign minister, Talbak Nazarov.

However, the line-up for Tuesday's summit which will be attended by leaders from member states Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, reflects the tensions over the war.

Though the purist Muslim Taliban militia control some two-thirds of the country, Afghanistan will be represented by Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who fled Kabul last September before the Taliban seized control of the capital.

Mr. Rabbani shares control of the northern third of the country with allies, ethnic-Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum and a Shiite Muslim faction based in the central plain.

Equally, Pakistan, which supports the Taliban, is not sending its president like the other states, but Nawaz Sharif, the recently elected prime minister. A Pakistani diplomat here said it was possible that a Taliban delegation could turn up on the fringes of the meeting.

If they do, they will be interested to hear a presentation by Turkmen President Saparmourad Niyazov on plans to build a \$2.5 billion gas pipeline across Afghanistan.

Zaire rebels talk tough ahead of peace talks

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (R) — Zairean rebels talked tough Monday and said peace talks Wednesday would be President Mobutu Sese Seko's last chance to bow out gracefully.

The rebels, who now control three quarters of the country, said they were fighting their way towards the capital Kinshasa under their new policy of coupling military pressure with diplomatic attempts to avert bloodshed in the city.

Rebel leader Laurent Kabila will meet Mr. Mobutu aboard the South African Navy ship the Outeniqua off Congo Wednesday in a second attempt to agree on a peaceful transfer of power.

"The meeting with Mobutu Wednesday will be the second and last one and let no one make a mistake about that," rebel "information minister" Raphael Ngenda told Reuters. His foreign affairs counterpart, Bizima Karaha added: "Our understanding is that we are going to the boat to accept Mobutu's resignation, nothing less, nothing more."

"We have bent backwards to accommodate a dictator but everything has a limit and we have reached ours. Wednesday will determine whether we make a soft landing in Kinshasa or a tough military entry," Mr. Karaha added.

Rebel commanders confirmed their forces were on the move again, renouncing the standstill pledge they gave to South African President Nelson Mandela at the first meeting on May 4.

"We are advancing towards Kinshasa. Our forces are walking in all directions and our destination is the capital city," said Mr. Kabila's son Joseph, who is commander of rebel frontline units.

"The end should come very swiftly. I do not see the hold-out in Kinshasa lasting long. It will come in the next few days," he added. The rebels say they are less than 200 kilometres from the teeming capital of five million people.

The rebels admit they are facing stiff resistance as they approached Kinshasa but say this is due to the presence of thousands of battle-hardened Angolan fighters from the Angolan rebel group UNITA.

Mr. Karaha said again Sunday that government forces backed by UNITA and former Rwandan Hutu government troops were preparing to massacre foreigners in Kinshasa in order to trigger foreign intervention. He appealed to expatriates to leave the city.

"It is trick Mobutu has used successfully in the past to sustain his regime. They are now preparing to slaughter foreigners so as to spark an international intervention in Kinshasa," Mr. Karaha said.

"We appeal to foreigners to leave Kinshasa for their own

safety and return once our forces are in control of the city. We are not frightening anyone. We're just worried about Mobutu's latest strategy," Mr. Karaha said.

Political manoeuvring has intensified ahead of Wednesday's meeting between Mr. Mobutu and Mr. Kabila.

On the humanitarian front, an aid mission to a rebel-held area of eastern Zaire said Sunday it had discovered thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees, many on the verge of death.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, who helped bring Mr. Mobutu and Mr. Kabila together on May 4, said the jury was still out on Mr. Kabila's democratic credentials.

"It's very important that Zaire be managed and governed democratically, that he have market reforms, that he institute human rights processes, that he deal with the refugees," Mr. Richardson told U.S.-based CNN television.

Julian Fleet, a U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) official, said a U.N. mission found about 5,000 to 6,000 refugees near a village at Kilometre 82 south of Kisangani.

"Many people have died there and many more are on the verge of death," he told reporters in Kisangani.

Mr. Mobutu, 66, has dominated the mineral-rich country at the heart of Africa for over three decades.

The rebels, who took up arms in October, insist that Mr. Mobutu step down immediately and hand power to Mr. Kabila.

Mr. Karaha said the rebels might pull out of the South African peace initiative if Roman Catholic Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo accepted the job of speaker — the constitutional successor to the president in the event of death or incapacity.

Mobutu supporters, who have a majority in the transitional parliament, voted Saturday to give him back the job.

With rebels claiming to be advancing closer toward the capital, Western countries are finalising evacuation plans amid fears that Zairian soldiers may rampage through the city.

The United States has rehearsed plans to evacuate Americans as preparations continued for a second face-to-face meeting between President Mobutu and Mr. Kabila.

A mission of 100 U.S. Marines using two CH-53 transport helicopters, two CH-46 transport helicopters and two Cobra helicopter gun ships as escorts were ready to react quickly if fighting starts in Kinshasa, Navy Commander Bob Anderson said Sunday. The Marines are among about 1,500 U.S. troops stationed in neighbouring Congo.

Britain, France and Belgium also have troops in Congo

More N. Koreans flee their hungry homeland

SEOUL (R) — South Korea said its navy intercepted a vessel carrying 14 North Korean asylum seekers Monday — one of the largest groups ever to flee the hunger-stricken Communist nation.

Meanwhile, a U.N. aid official reported that famine was ticking like a time bomb in the country and could explode at any time.

The South Korean Defence Ministry said the boat was spotted off the west coast of the Korean peninsula near a military demarcation line that has split the two Koreas since their 1950-53 war.

It probably sailed straight from the North and was being escorted to the western port of Incheon, where it was due at around midnight (1500 GMT), a ministry spokesman said.

On board were two families, one with eight people and the other with six.

It was one of the biggest defections ever from Communist North Korea.

The largest was a group of 17 — including 16 members of a single family —

that arrived in the South last December after a six-week long epic escape through China and into Hong Kong.

Last month North Korea's former top ideologue, Hwang Jang-Yop, arrived in Seoul after an escape that took him through Beijing and the Philippines.

In Beijing, a United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) official said hungry people in North Korea were eating bark, leaves and mushrooms to stay alive.

"The situation is...a famine in slow motion," Tun Myat, director of the transport and logistics division of the WFP, told a news conference.

"It's ticking away like a time bomb," said Mr. Myat. Babies and children were in various stages of malnutrition and hospitals lacked equipment and patients because people could not afford to send sick relatives for treatment.

"They ate bark and leaves," Mr. Myat said, referring to people he saw during a two-week visit.

"Stalks of corn, cobs of corn, empty pea and bean pods, mushroom stems and whatever that in most other countries would either have been thrown away or would have at best been used for animal feed are now being milled into powder."

In some areas seaweed had become a major staple, and it was difficult to say when the "point of no return" would come.

The WFP estimates North Korea needs an additional 1.3 million tonnes of food in 1997. It has appealed for 200,000 tonnes worth \$96 million, but has received only \$38 million of that to date.

Separately, the South Korean Red Cross said it planned to begin shipping 15,000 tonnes of corn to North Korea next week to help stave off famine.

Lee Byung-Woong said his organisation also planned to give its North Korean counterpart an estimate of how much other food aid was planned.

That issue had created a deadlock in inter-Korean Red Cross talks in Beijing aimed at speeding up aid shipments. The talks, held

earlier this month, were the first contact between the two Korean organisations in nearly five years.

The North demanded to know the exact amount of aid before it would discuss how the grain would be delivered. South Korea wants food aid to go across the land border, instead of by ship, and be clearly labelled as having come from the South.

In another development, a Pyongyang defector living in Seoul reported that North Korean authorities foiled a plot by cadets at a military academy to assassinate top leader Kim Jong-Il in 1995.

The cadets planned to axe Kim to death during a martial arts display, the defector wrote in an article published by South Korea's Nae-Woe Press, which monitors North Korea.

But the plot was uncovered and the ringleaders were executed, the article said.

It added that there had been numerous plots since the 1970s to kill former "great leader" Kim Il Sung, who died in 1994, and his son, Kim Jong-Il.

Primakov: Talks with NATO to be decisive

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov has said talks between Moscow and NATO this week would show whether the former cold war foes can sign a security deal on May 27.

He told Russia television progress had been made at negotiations on forging a peaceful new relationship, but he could not guarantee that his talks with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana in Moscow Tuesday would solve all problems.

"There are still some loose ends, some issues which have to be resolved, and the negotiations will

continue right until the end," Mr. Primakov said in an interview recorded on May 8.

"But already on May 13 or 14, when General Secretary Solana is in Moscow, it will be clear whether we can get to sign the document on May 27 or not."

Asked if it was still possible an agreement would not be signed on the May 27 target date set by President Boris Yeltsin, Mr. Primakov replied: "I can't rule that out."

Mr. Yeltsin said last Thursday a document on Russia's relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Or-

ganisation (NATO) was "98 per cent" ready and he might join the coming talks in Moscow to try to finalise the deal.

Russia opposes NATO's plans to expand eastwards to take in new members from the former Soviet Bloc.

But he has signalled he wants a deal on terms for a new partnership with NATO, and as many concessions as possible, before the Western defence alliance issue the first new-membership invitations in July.

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are thought to be top of the list to join,

confidence by mounting some eight months of intimidating war games and missile tests near Taiwan.

Taiwan resumed live-fire missile exercises in March, taking advantage of reduced cross-strait tension to test-fire U.S. Hawk missiles in the Taiwan Strait.

China has regarded Taiwan as renegade province since a civil war split them in 1949 and maintained it is prepared to attack the island if the Taipei government abandons its pro-unification policies and opts for independence.

Taiwan war games to test high-tech weapons — report

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan will hold live-fire war games from June to August to give troops practice with new weapons purchased to counter China's military modernisation, the Liberty Times said Monday.

The annual Han Kwang 13 drills, designed to test a range of new high-technology systems, would be held in eastern and southern Taiwan, the newspaper quoted military sources as saying.

The sources said the manoeuvres would involve new F-16 and Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft, recently

imported from the United States and France over Beijing's bitter objections, as well as newly-refitted M60A3 tanks.

Also to be tested, they said, were several French-made Lafayette-class frigates nicknamed "Stealth" warships because of their ability to evade radar.

The Defence Ministry declined to comment on the report.

In 1996, Taiwan suspended its Han Kwang 12 drills to avoid exacerbating tensions with China after Beijing battered local business

China rejects charges of influence-peddling in U.S.

BEIJING (AFP) — China Monday angrily rejected fresh reports that it made covert cash donations to U.S. politicians in a bid to buy favours and influence U.S. foreign policy.

"The report that the American side has found new evidence about China's political contributions is sheer fabrication," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

The spokesman was reacting to an article in Newsweek magazine Sunday that said China's State Council had covertly funneled almost \$1 million to the United States.

The magazine, quoting unnamed federal law enforcement officials, said the money was sent to the United States through the Chinese embassy in Washington and Chinese consulates in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Houston. The Newsweek article followed a Washington Post report last month that the FBI had uncovered substantial evidence linking top Chinese leaders to an influence-peddling scheme.

"We have noticed that some American newspapers and people repeatedly assert that they have uncovered so-called new evidence," the spokesman said.

"The fact is that the evidence is totally fake, or makes accusations against the wrong person," he said, adding that the Chinese government had never authorised political donations to the United States.

"The development of Sino-U.S. relations cannot be controlled by money," he added.

Newsweek said officials with a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) special task force investigating the money flow believed it showed China had a detailed plan to influence U.S. foreign policy. The magazine said Beijing was especially keen on influencing U.S. politicians because they were frustrated at Taiwan's history of successful U.S. lobbying.

In an interview with the U.S.-based television network CNN Friday, Chinese President Jiang Zemin had said there were no facts to substantiate the U.S. media claims.

"My government has never been involved in or supported any political contributions," Mr. Jiang said.

"Some people in U.S. even claim that the top leadership in China had approved of making of political contributions. This has no base in fact," he added.

Meanwhile, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich said Sunday there was less support this year than last for renewing China's trade privileges because of concerns over human rights and civil rights in Hong Kong.

"I don't know if it'll pass or not right now," Mr. Gingrich, Republican of Georgia, said on the NBC programme Meet The Press in reply to a question.

"I think that it is certainly a weaker vote today than it was a year ago, and people are very concerned about the early indications of Hong Kong," he added.

But Mr. Gingrich cited what he called a "powerful countervailing argument" in favour of renewing Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) status advanced by Hong Kong leaders such as Martin Lee.

"We want to have MFN. We want to have Most Favoured Nation status for a year," he said. MFN is the normal trade status enjoyed with the United States by virtually every country except Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam and a few others. The U.S. ambassador to

the United Nations, Bill Richardson, said in a separate television interview that the Clinton administration strongly favoured continuing MFN for China to help integrate it more closely into the international community and maintain China's support on other issues.

"The MFN debate comes up in July. We believe it's important to continue it," Mr. Richardson said on the CNN programme late edition.

Mr. Gingrich urged President Bill Clinton to reconsider a Republican suggestion that the congressional vote be delayed or the trade privileges renewed for less than a full year to see how Beijing treats Hong Kong when the British colony reverts to China at midnight on June 30.

"I think that the president would be well-served to look for a signal of flexibility to send to the Chinese that he is concerned about human rights, that he is paying attention to Hong Kong," Mr. Gingrich said.

He said he had been "a little disappointed" that the White House had promptly said Mr. Clinton would veto any effort to delay a vote. "I think that's the wrong signal to China," he added.

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Condemning Israeli torture

LAST WEEK'S U.N. condemnation of Israeli torture practices confirms what the entire world already knows about the increasing resort to torture by Israeli security forces against Palestinian detainees. Especially damaging to Israel in the Committee Against Torture decision were the juridical and political implications therein. As the Israeli high court has condoned the use of duress against Palestinians during interrogations, the Israeli agents who perpetrated these criminal acts were rendered immune to any prosecution whether domestic or international. With the committee's decision enjoying precedence over Israeli court decisions, even those made by the highest court of the land, all Israelis implicated in the practice become liable for international prosecution.

This is where the committee's decision calling on Israel to halt the practice of medical torture is most compelling and far-reaching. Henceforth even Israelis deemed accomplices to the practice of torture would be subject to prosecution by the international community. Israel can no longer hide behind its own lax judicial rulings on torture. As Israel has ratified the Covenant Against Torture it is obligated not only to implement its provisions but also heed the rulings of the committee which monitors the application of the covenant.

There is also a lesson in this to all the countries which are signatories to the covenant. No country can ever expect to escape the scrutiny of the U.N. committee regarding torture. And once the committee makes a ruling against any given country it becomes binding and enforceable. The international condemnation of Israeli torture practices has also put the spotlight on Israel as a country that is not as democratic as it claims or desires the international community to believe. By forfeiting its credentials as a free and democratic state which respects the rule of law, Israel stands to be further ostracised and isolated. The first order of business for Israel in the wake of the committee's recent ruling is to immediately annul all guidelines which purport to legitimise torture. New police instructions need to be drafted and disseminated. Above all, the country's supreme court must reverse its former ruling authorising torture by upholding the committee order as the law of the land.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily said that Israel's celebrations these days of what they call their independence anniversary is in reality a celebration of their continued massacres against the Palestinians and the Arab people in the neighbouring countries. Mahmoud Rimawi said that as they hold their celebrations, they display to the whole world their racism, maintaining their occupation of Arab land, colonising the Palestinian territories, denying the Palestinians their basic rights and pursuing their oppression against defenceless women and children. Coming from various parts of the world and settling in Palestine after driving most of its Arab population out of the country, these Zionists continue to teach their children how to hate and kill the Arabs and Palestinians whose lands they have stolen, said the writer. The Zionists are celebrating what they call their independence anniversary by committing violence against the civilian Arabs and crimes against women and children, he added. The state of Israel, said the writer, has been founded on the ruins of the Arab homes of Palestine and at the expense of the rights of the indigenous population who continues to face oppression under occupation.

A WRITER for the weekly Al Majd said Monday that collaborators with Israel and those who offer services to the enemy after receiving promises of good life and remuneration should take a lesson from the Druze who live in the state of Israel. Arafat Hijazi said that the Druze citizens serve with the Israeli army and they are stationed at the borders and in occupied Arab territories carrying out atrocities against the Arab people of Palestine and executing Israel's orders. But these Druze receive no better treatment from the Israeli government for serving the Israeli army and helping the Zionists to consolidate their hold on Arab land than the Arab Israelis, said the writer. This fact came to light through an Israeli television documentary which recently presented the candid views, the complaints and the bitterness of the Druze community whose lands are also being confiscated for Jewish settlements purposes and who are considered second-class Israeli citizens, said the writer. Despite the Druze sacrifices for the Jewish state, with many of them fallen in the wars with the Arabs, and despite their loyalty to the Zionist leaders, said the writer, the Druze community is mistreated like the Arabs and their example should serve as a lesson to citizens, Druze or otherwise, who might ever contemplate collaborating with the Jewish state.

The View from Fourth Circle

Empires and umpires, religion, nations and other epics

By Rami G. Khouri

ANTICIPATING THE commemoration of the millennium in a few years, this week I have dutifully made a quick review of the last 2000 years of human history.

I conclude that there are only two truly "historic" events worthy of that label on a global scale, both of which took place this century: the formal end of the Ottoman Empire around 1920 and with the Treaty of Sevres, and the move of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team from Brooklyn (New York City) to Los Angeles in 1957.

The noted political theorist Michael Walzer has stated that all of human history can be summarised in terms of four basic political arrangements that have ever existed: multinational empires, consociations (bi-national or tri-national states), nation-states, and immigrant societies (such as the U.S. and Canada). In this context, the end of the Ottoman Empire is authentically historic because it represented the end of a political form — the multinational empire — that had flourished continuously throughout the world since around the middle of the 4th Millennium BC. Not a bad run, as political forms go.

Multinational empires, for thousands of years in Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, Greece, Rome and elsewhere, long provided a means for different tribal, ethnic or even national groups to coexist within a loose, larger framework, even one that was imperially imposed and not of their own choosing. The continuity and flexibility of human society within ancient multinational empires had maintained a logic and integrity at both the largest and smallest levels of human life — the local community and the global economy. The break-up of Ottoman lands under European colonial tutelage ended this tradition, and confirmed the nation-state as the universal national configuration, at least at that moment in history. The advent of universal nation-statehood brought with it borders, passports, security systems, rapid urbanisation, concentration of power in the capital and inward-looking political and economic control mechanisms. It triggered a whole new manner in which people identified themselves, and in which they related to their family, neighbours, rulers, environment, and their region and the world; this novelty was sealed by the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, and encapsulated in the rise of the nation-state.

The second truly seminal event of world history in the last two thousand years — the move of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team to Los Angeles — occurred soon after the demise of the Ottoman Empire and of the imperial phenomenon as a whole. The Dodgers left Brooklyn primarily because the city would not build them a new stadium and because more money could be made in Los Angeles. The symbolism of the move was far deeper than the geographical transfer of a professional sports franchise; it was closer to the biological and psychological wounding of a community, perhaps even something akin to a biblical rite of sacrifice. This transcended sports; it was a profound symbol of the nature and direction of human society in the mid-20th century, in that new land — the United States — that had become the global pio-

neer in human social trends and national/political configuration. It took the fragmentation of empire into nation-state one hard step further.

The Dodgers' leaving Brooklyn fractured what had been a stable community based on clearly defined norms of communalism, coherence, identity and solidarity. It sent the message that the financial profits and material well-being of individual owners (and later of players) were more important than the integrity and wholeness of the wider community. It was, in its way, the first disturbing sign of post-modernism's chilling commitment to individualistic materialism over the collective security of a community's sacred imagery of itself and its place in the world.

Let me state clearly — so that I am not accused of historical delusions based on self-interest — that I am not and never have been a Brooklyn Dodgers fan; their appellation as the "bums" has always struck me as both accurate and appropriate, and eternal as well, for in the important world of baseball I was and remain a New York Yankees fan. But this should not detract from the nearly cosmic significance of the Brooklyn Dodgers' departure from their city: the move signalled the end of a global historical era that had started in the Neolithic period, some ten thousand years earlier, when nomadic hunter-gatherer families settled permanently and lived in villages year-round, ushering in the powerful and nearly simultaneous advents of community, tribalism, social organisation, and identity; these four forces later in history would lead to the mega-phenomena of urbanism, nationalism, religion and law — precisely the phenomena that would start to fragment and then shatter under the post-modern fraying of community and commodification of human culture that was first savagely, cruelly symbolised by the sudden move of the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles.

If you don't believe me, listen to these two wise authors. First, at the macro-global level, listen to what the noted historian of nationalism E.J. Hobsbawm has to say about the role of sports and other non-traditional aspects of nationalism after 1918, in his book "Nations and Nationalism" since 1780: "National identification in this era acquired new means of expressing itself in modern, urbanised, high-technology societies... [one means was the mass media]... The gap between private and public worlds was also bridged by sport. Between the wars sport as a mass spectacle was transformed into the unending succession of gladiatorial contests between persons and teams symbolising state-nations... The imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself."

Then, what Hobsbawm sees at the national and international level, the contemporary American writer Alan Leichuk, in his 1990 novel "Brooklyn Boy", reveals also to be a powerful local sentiment which assumes symbols of nation-statehood. The young boy in his novel, growing up in Brooklyn in the 1950s, refers to the Dodgers baseball team and their playing

field, Ebbets Field, in the following terms: "The square-block, three-tiered coliseum curved to a bow front, with a blue and white striped awning marking the front entrance... Here on home ground it was the entrance to a baseball field. Sacred baseball field. Above, from the roof, flew two important flags: the Stars and Stripes and the Dodger banner... This building, with its emerald diamond within, was the place of true worship, the shrine visited weekly by a hundred thousand or more religious devotees, devout followers since childhood, the long faithful."

Leichuk speaks of the Dodgers — remember, this is a bunch of young men playing with a ball and bat — in terms of "history... mythology... a national monument... [and] tribal deity". He says of the Dodgers fans that, "we, the faithful tribe of Brooklyn, trekked to the Shrine, and preserved our faith... the Dodgers remained our religion"; and of the team's move to Los Angeles he writes, "only in America, perhaps, could they have ripped away that shrine of devotion — the owner moved the team away from Brooklyn in 1957 because the borough wouldn't build him a grander stadium — and later replace it with a housing project — with such impunity, such easy callousness, such casual disregard of the public will, and the city's soul."

This is not a lone, crazed fan, but rather the voice of his people, accurately articulating a primal attachment to place, community and identity that are betrayed by his allusions to tribe, religion, soul and nationalism. For the Dodgers were not just a sports team, and Brooklyn was not just a borough of a city of a state in a new country. In mid-20th century immigrant, mobile and increasingly suburbanised and individualistic America, sports took on other, older attributes — sports represented the tribalism, nationalism, religion and ethnic identity that had always been experienced by more anchored, traditional communities around the world during the previous ten thousand years.

So, in retrospect, the Dodgers quitting Brooklyn in 1957 signalled a fundamental change in human values and civilisation. Just as the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the universalism of the nation-state had shifted the focus of human endeavor from local and imperial levels to the new level of the formally defined and politically centralised state, so did the Dodgers' departure for Los Angeles in 1957 represent the first signs of a shift away from the integrity of local and national community to the primacy of narrow, cash-based, individual needs and greed. That fundamental transformation has continued uninterrupted for the past half a century. It highlights the existential, historic and linear relationship between politics, history, society and the individual — what the New York-based baseball writer Joel Sherman succinctly refers to as simply the question of "empires and umpires" — a matter well worth pondering as we approach the millennium with the nation-state and nationalism seemingly continuing to fray, while the growth industries of our day appear to be consumerism, sports and religion.

Until genocide is ended, there can be no true globalisation

By Sadako Ogata

WASHINGTON — As we all know, genocide, characterised by the intent to destroy national, ethnic or religious groups, is the most violent and pernicious form of human rights violations. Yet in the decades since the Holocaust, we have not been able to prevent or halt even the most brutal forms of violence against whole groups of people.

It is true that the international human rights movement and especially the end of the cold war have brought progress. The allied intervention in northern Iraq protected the Kurds there. The humanitarian interventions in Somalia and Bosnia saved people from starvation. In many other conflicts U.N. peacekeepers prevented new outbreaks of violence. Numerous lifesaving relief operations were unthinkable some decades ago. They are very positive, but not enough.

Why did it take until August 1995 before the people of Sarajevo and other besieged cities in Bosnia were saved by NATO and peace was pushed through? Is neutrality morally and practically viable in the face of widespread atrocities? Why was no country prepared to step into Rwanda at the height of the genocide in 1994? Why was the multinational force that had been authorised to come to the rescue of hundreds of thousands of refugees in eastern Zaire cancelled in December of last year? Thousands of people have perished in eastern Zaire since then. The answer to these questions seems clear. It is because the major powers perceived no strategic interests or because their interests did not converge. In that sense the situation does not fundamentally differ from the cold war years when political interests, stemming from ideological confrontation, were a cause for not halting the killing fields of Cambodia.

In my view there can be no true globalisation, if it is only economic, if we do not even reach out to halt genocidal situations. While respecting cultural diversity, true globalisation means universal respect for human rights, of the positive side of man, of the responsibility to provide protection against evil. That lies at the heart of refugee protection. Now, we have to take it one

step further and be prepared to halt the worst evil at its source. That is my hope at the threshold of the next millennium. We need determined political leadership. We need citizens who are prepared to look beyond the domestic horizon and who can spur reluctant politicians into action. I understand why they want to avoid risks involving soldiers in a faraway land. One of the reasons why we need an energetic and effective United Nations is to mitigate these risks through international burden sharing. It is also why I advocate the establishment of an early and rapid deployment capability to intervene in the worst crisis situations. Such a capability would prevent escalation, would save money and, what is more important, would save lives.

We need a strong United Nations human rights machinery to prevent but also expose violations of human rights. We also need an international criminal court. The potential Pol Pots of this world — yes, the planners and not just the perpetrators — must be deterred by the prospect of criminal justice. And is it fair and realistic to expect the survivors to forgive and to cooperate if there is no justice? In the absence of justice, private revenge may prevail.

Let me now turn to another question. If we do not or cannot prevent massive human rights abuses, are we at least offering a safe haven to those escaping and knocking at our doors?

In looking back, the refugee issues of the 1930s and 1940s seem simple. While some desperate Jews were admitted to safety abroad, there were also many more who were stopped in their tracks. In light of the current debate in the United States about asylum seekers without proper documents, I must note that those who managed to escape often did so by using fraudulent documents, issued and accepted by sympathetic officials. It may not be so widely known that the Japanese Consul in Estonia, Chitoshi Suhigara, issued hundreds of visas to allow Jews to leave Europe. Also Consul Ryoichi Manabe provided residence permits to Jewish refugees to protect their stay in Shanghai. You know, of course, about Raoul Wallenberg. These episodes of

personal courage are important reminders that individuals can make a difference.

From our vantage point in the 1990s, this haunting memory of people trapped behind borders was simply part of the world's larger moral failure to confront persecution and genocide. Yet at the time, the issues seemed to be as complex as they appear today. High rates of unemployment, suspicion towards foreigners — especially those with unpopular religious beliefs or political views, exaggerated fears of the floodgates being opened and foreign policy considerations had a higher priority than the lives of the persecuted. In our own time, these concerns are very similar.

The end of the cold war has meant that refugee protection no longer dovetails so neatly with strategic imperatives. Nevertheless, the need for asylum has not diminished. On the contrary, the persecutors, torturers and warmongers of the world have flourished in the current state of flux. But the doors are closing around the world. Refugees are seen primarily as a political, economic and environmental burden. They also represent security hazards.

In the developed world, while we realise that there are some economic migrants who abuse the asylum system, we must insist that each asylum-seeker has his or her case duly considered and that the refugee definition is not stripped of its meaning by a restrictive interpretation. One month ago, a new expedited removal procedure was instituted at U.S. ports of entry for those arriving without proper documents. Many refugees will have trouble articulating their claim under the conditions of detention and the short-time frame that are now in place. The new fast-track procedure will be particularly difficult for survivors of torture and other extreme trauma. In the meantime, interdiction of boats at sea continues, bringing to mind the voyage of the St. Louis in 1939.

We should work to prevent the deportation of Bosnian refugees who cannot yet return to their own homes. It is wishful thinking to assume that my office can make repatriation possible if political leaders in Bosnia are allowed to pursue

their heinous policies of ethnic division and if shelter is not reconstructed more quickly. Premature returns will cause great human suffering and may destabilise a fragile peace.

Elsewhere it is vital that the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps be maintained. The Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania were controlled by armed men, many of whom were probably guilty of genocide. We asked for international help in getting these people out of the camps. No country offered to get involved. My staff had to continue feeding criminals as the price for feeding hundreds of thousands of innocent women and children. We should not have been left in that position. Unarmed relief workers are expected to face increasing danger in many situations.

Why do we still care about asylum? Because, as in the past, it is the safest mechanism when all other human rights protections fail. I have three pleas. First, while managing immigration as a legitimate concern, do not shut out those fleeing for their lives and freedom. Unlike others, refugees don't have a choice.

Second, I urge opinion leaders to de-dramatise and depoliticise the asylum debate. Do not let racism and xenophobia set the agenda. Asylum issues are manageable, particularly in Western countries. The total number of asylum-seekers in the West has been falling. It is neither necessary nor helpful to invoke an atmosphere of crisis in setting refugee policy.

Third, I would ask you to maintain perspective. Throughout the ages, many refugees have enriched societies. Einstein was a refugee. Madeleine Albright was one. And refugee problems can be solved. Millions of people do find refuge and millions eventually do go home. Most refugees want desperately to go home, and their return is the most gratifying sight I see as I travel the world.

The writer is United Nations high commissioner for refugees. The above article, reprinted from The Washington Post, was adapted from a speech Mrs. Ogata delivered at the Holocaust Memorial Museum on April 30.

LETTERS

Off line for a line

To the Editor:

I AM sure that somebody will have a rational explanation for what happened to me the other day, but I certainly cannot find one.

It all started when I received a telephone bill for a certain sum of money. Really, I had intended to pay it, but as luck would have it, the day I chose to go to the bank was a holiday: May 1; the next day was a Friday. And on Saturday my day began with a disconnected telephone. I had no idea that to reconnect it would cause me so much trouble.

I had about half an hour before a meeting at work so I thought I could rush over and pay the bill.

I would have never dreamed that when I would get to the telephone company there would be lines that stretched on forever just to pay a bill.

In spite of all the people, there was only one person at the one and only computer and there was only one person to take the overdue money.

I finally reached the window to pay the money and, to my dismay, I was told that the sum I had to pay was not the figure stated, but a new figure that seemed to be a penalty for delay.

I was about JD 14 short. I frantically asked whether I could write a check and was told that that would be no problem only I had to go to the bank and get my check certified.

What use was there going to the bank to get a check certified? I could as well go to the bank and get cash. When I asked the lady at the window, about closing time, she replied: "Oh, we stay open until later."

Everyone in line volunteered the information that the window would remain open until 8 in the evening.

So I was late to work, I had a bewildered husband frantically looking for his "missing" wife and, when after delivering the rest of my classes I went back to the telephone company to pay my bill in its entirety, I found it closed!

The policeman guarding the building was really very helpful and explained to me that the section where one pays bills shuts at around... 3 o'clock?

I was tired, hot, desperate. I guess he felt sorry for me so he called an employee inside who, fortunately, was a very kind and understanding man.

He offered to take the money and pay the bill for me the next day after I explained that I could not go through the same procedure another time. The man proved to be very honest and at around 8 a.m. the following morning my phone was reconnected.

What happened to me happens to so many others. It simply is not right that people should be forced to stand in line for three and four hours at a time. There should definitely be more than one computer and more than one person to take the money! As long as people continue to feel that the system fails them, there will be loss of faith in the way things are run.

E. Yaghi,
Amman.

Not the only one

To the Editor:

I AM an American who lived in Jordan for three years. My daughter attended school in the Kingdom and I totally agree with everything Christy Lunum said in her letter "Grist for writing" (Jordan Times, May 11, 1997).

Laurie Abu Obied,
U.S.

To experience the A4 please call your Audi dealer for a test drive. **MOTOR TRADE CO. LTD.** Head Office Marka: 892855 Mahatta: 651338 Safeway: 687388.

AMF chief urges Arabs to boost growth to tackle unemployment

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A top Arab monetary official has urged regional states to take measures to spur economic growth to tackle unemployment which he said was as high as 30 per cent in some members.

Jassim Al Manai, chairman of the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), made the call at the end of annual talks of Arab finance ministers, who approved reports by the region's main development funds showing they performed better in 1996.

Despite such strong performance, coupled with a sharp growth rates in 1996 and lower inflation and deficits, regional economies are still lagging behind population growth and this has resulted in a steady rise in unemployment.

"What makes it more imperative to work for achieving high growth rates in Arab economies is the high growth levels in the population," said Mr. Manai, whose Abu Dhabi-based AMF is the Arab League's main financial organisation.

"Unemployment is steadily growing in some of our countries, with the rate

ranging between 15 and 30 per cent," Mr. Manai told the conference in Abu Dhabi.

"The problem is considered more serious when we take into account the age structure in the Arab World and the large annual increase in manpower as such an increase is among the highest in the world," he pointed out.

Mr. Manai, a Bahraini, said the gross domestic product (GDP) of the 22-member Arab League surged by 4.5 per cent in 1996 compared with two per cent in 1995.

But he added the high growth was caused mainly by a large increase in oil prices, which averaged around \$20 in 1996.

The price improvement and ongoing economic reforms enabled regional states to trim their combined budget deficit to 3.3 per cent of the GDP from five per cent and cut inflation to 9.4 per cent from 12 per cent.

"Despite the good results in efforts to achieve internal and external economic stability, our countries still need more efforts to accel-

erate growth rates, which remain modest compared to other developing nations," Mr. Manai said.

Slow growth, inflation and financial deficits are among the main economic difficulties that have faced most Arab states over the past two decades because of political instability, wrong economic policies, and state domination. The problem was aggravated by a steady capital flight and low oil prices.

Such difficulties and the changes in the world economic order have prompted several regional states to embark on reforms, including privatisation, improvement of investment laws and easing fiscal restrictions.

Oil-rich Gulf states have followed suit to cushion the impact of weak crude prices on their economies, which depend heavily on oil export earnings.

Mr. Manai said reforms were attracting investments but the rate of capital flow remained far lower than that in other developing countries.

"Some members which have reported high levels of

investments need to utilise available resources more efficiently. They should also lessen dependence on taxes and customs, make the taxation system more flexible, accelerate the privatisation process and upgrade efficiency," he said.

"In other members, despite encouraging economic results, there are still some restrictions on their financial systems," the AMF chief indicated.

Mr. Manai said the accumulating foreign debt was another major problem facing Arab countries in their attempts to repair their economies.

He said non-oil Arab countries owed around \$140 billion at the end of 1996, accounting for more than 65 per cent of their GDP. The debt servicing of \$12 billion constitutes nearly a quarter of their exports.

"All these indicators require efforts by our countries to increase growth rates and upgrade economic performance to ensure jobs and improve the living standards of our people, especially low-income groups," he said.

Bank of Israel denies considering foreign exchange regime

TEL AVIV (R) — The Bank of Israel has denied media reports it was studying a change to the foreign exchange system which would lead to a slower depreciation of the Israeli shekel.

The shekel is pegged to a basket of foreign currencies and can trade in a band of seven per cent above or below a sloping midpoint, designed to devalue the local currency at a rate of six per cent a year.

Israel's Haaretz newspaper, quoting central bank sources, reported the Bank of Israel was considering slowing the rate to four per cent a year from six per cent. "A plan like this is not at all being discussed in the bank," the Bank of Israel said in a statement.

But central bank sources told Reuters some senior Bank of Israel economists support reducing the rate of change.

The depreciation rate,

which has not changed since 1993, takes account of the difference between inflation in Israel and that of its main trading partners.

Haaretz said that bank economists noted the government's 1997 inflation target is seven to 10 per cent, or an average of 8.5 per cent. Since inflation in Israel's main trading partners averages 4.5 per cent, Haaretz reported some Bank of Israel officials believe the shekel's depreciation rate should be four per cent rather than six.

"The Bank of Israel states that only after the government takes a decision on the inflation target for 1998 will it be possible to discuss changes, if at all, in slowing the exchange rate band against the currency basket," the central bank said.

A slower rate of depreciation would require less intervention on the part of the central bank to prevent the shekel from appreciating beyond its trading band.

Investors put off by lack of peace in Middle East

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Unrest in some Arab countries and the absence of a final peace settlement in the Middle East are obstructing capital flow into the region despite economic reforms, an Arab official has said.

Although private Arab investment in the region has grown sharply over the past few years, total capital inflow has remained a fraction of the worldwide Arab investments, said Maumun Ibrahim, director general of the Kuwaiti-based Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation.

Mr. Ibrahim said direct Arab investment in the region surged from around \$500 million annually between 1985 and 1992 to \$1 billion in 1994 and \$1.5 billion in 1995.

The figure was estimated to have reached \$2.1 billion in 1996.

"Looking at international investment in the Arab region, we find that its share did not exceed one per cent in 1995 and 1996, when such investments were concentrated in South East Asia and

Latin America," he said. "Despite the relative improvement in the investment climate in the Arab World, there are negative factors that are still affecting investment, including internal instability and the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has not been totally resolved by the partial peace agreements."

Mr. Ibrahim gave no figures about investments in the 22-member Arab League but independent estimates showed Arab funds invested in the region stood at around \$18 billion at the end of 1996. This compares with the Arab overseas assets of more than \$800 billion. Attracting capital has become crucial for Arab states carrying out reforms to heal their economic woes caused by weak oil prices and state domination of the economies.

As such, more measures are needed to lure in capital, including a greater role by the private sector, political stability, development of the infrastructure and introducing more incentives and guarantees for investors.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates		Prices as at 12/05/97 19:00	
	USD	GBP	JPY
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6101	143.75
DE Mark	0.3372	0.3366	0.5443
GB Sterling	1.6220	1.0000	163.34
CH Franc	0.8557	0.5279	125.20
JP Yen	0.0084	0.0053	1.0000
CA Dollar	0.7097	0.4461	104.42
IT Lira	0.0006	0.0004	0.0008
MC Guider	0.2320	0.1437	35.37
FR Franc	0.1741	0.1072	26.0370

Middle Eastern Currencies		Prices as at 12/05/97 19:00	
	USD	GBP	JPY
US Dollar	1.0000	0.6101	143.75
Jordan Dinar	0.7097	0.4461	104.42
GB Sterling	1.6220	1.0000	163.34
Qatar Dinar	0.2320	0.1437	35.37
Kuwait Dinar	0.2320	0.1437	35.37
Emirates Dinar	0.2320	0.1437	35.37
Libanese 1000	0.2320	0.1437	35.37
Egyptian	0.2320	0.1437	35.37

Energy	
Brent	19.85
WTI	21.20
Bony	19.85
Dubai	19.85
UL Gas	122.00

Mid-East Currencies		Prices as at 12/05/97 19:00	
	USD	GBP	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.1642	40.6200
AE Dirham	0.2668	0.1642	40.6200
KW Dinar	3.3001	2.0276	496.7700
OH Dinar	0.2668	0.1642	40.6200
CY Pound	1.9606	1.2071	291.9100

Metal Prices	
Gold (oz's)	350.2
Silver (oz's)	4.91
Platinum (oz's)	384.75
Al (3 Months)	1671
CU (3 Months)	2400
Zinc (3 Months)	1234
Lead (3 Months)	629
Ni (3 Months)	7820

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
USD	5.56
GBP	5.30
JPY	0.41
DEM	2.87
FRF	3.21
CHF	1.80
ITL	0.92

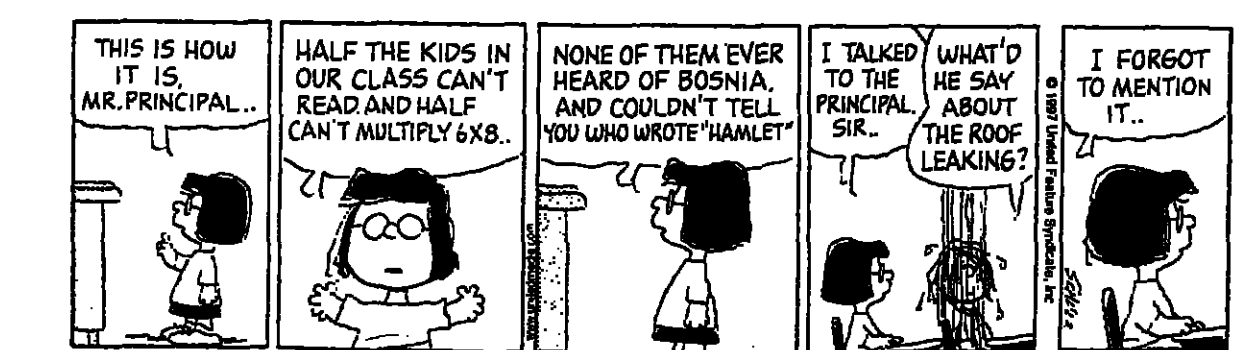
Main Equity Indices	
New York	DOW JONES
London	FT-SE 100
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225
Paris	CAC 40
Frankfurt	DAX

Energy	
Coffee (cib's)	242.17
Cocoa (cib's)	1488
Sugar (Shon)	318
Wheat (Shon)	178
Soya (cib's)	24.18
Yen (cib's)	187
Barley (Shon)	0
Rice (Shon)	480

JOD Cross Rates	
US Dollar	0.706
GB Sterling	1.1448
DE Mark	0.4198
CH Franc	0.8988
FR Franc	0.1246
JP Yen	0.5848
NI Guider	0.3732
IT Lira	0.4238

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Fuel price-setter, for short

5 Pump measures: abbr.

9 Harem sections

13 Dame Te Kanawa, e.g.

14 Ann Nichols hero

15 Breathing sounds

17 Small news-bit

18 Seem imminent

19 Vacuous

20 Neil Simon hit

23 Postal worker's do

24 "— Peter to pay Paul"

25 On land

28 Indolent

33 Milan's famed La —

34 Not for everyone

35 Original

36 Waller's sweet song

40 Football position

41 Makes tracks

42 Beau —

43 Intern

46 Most wise

47 Arrest

48 "The King —"

49 Sweetish false face

57 Thin as —

58 Advantage

59 Flair

60 Hundred: pref.

61 Forest creature

62 El — (ocean phenomenon)

63 Cruising

64 John of golf

65 Small amounts

8 Interstate rig

9 Prayer

10 European river

11 Jai —

12 Dispatched

16 Visit

21 Raid

22 Historian Durant

25 One of Jacob's sons

26 English muffin kin

27 Workers

28 Diamond side

29 Sacred chests

30 Win by —

31 Cozy homes

32 Chipping sound

34 Tourist attraction

37 Queen of —

38 Old oaths

39 Military unit

44 Urge

45 Show flower

46 Inclined to be scornful

48 Show backer

49 Pouch

50 Zone

51 Fires

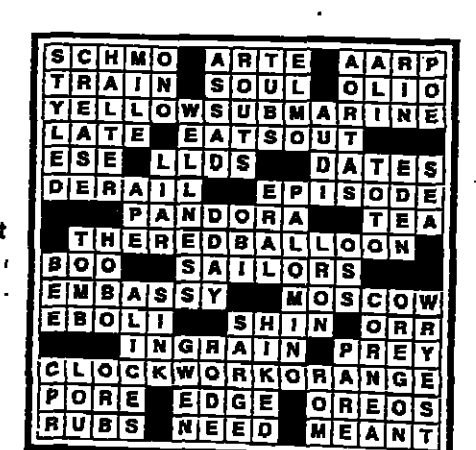
52 Fox

53 Brainstorm

54 Pelvic bones

55 Country

56 Baseball's Slaughter



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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, MAY 13, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Rhymer Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You have good creative ideas today, however, use care in pursuing them and study new data which will help for you to become prosperous. Later tonight you will be able to consult with those in authority and gain insight.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Study into today whatever is causing you difficulty at your home and clear it up right away so there won't be any lingering effects. Make the days ahead much brighter and thereby make your efforts more successful.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Communicate well with long-time fellow associates today and get much which is constructive, well-handled. Later this evening will be the time for you and your loved ones to get out of town and spend special time together.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Don't risk large sums of money today if you want a favour from another fellow associate who has the technical knowledge to make your career activities successful. Later this evening will be good to rest at home with loved ones.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Home affairs can be annoying today, so get out and delve into amusements which have proved satisfying in previous days. This evening can be quite special for your loved ones, if you plan some interesting recreational activities.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get into some intimate tasks today for you fellow associates and gain the backing you need instead of dashing around foolishly, like a chicken with its head cut off. Later this evening meet with a big and come to some conclusion.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A good friend today will help you to gain some ambition, so listen to what he or she has to say and make the best use of this information. If you want to enjoy a group affair, include others like yourself.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Listen to the advice today of older and more-wise individuals for any outside activities which you plan to participate in. Take it tonight with your loved ones and you can have a relaxing time together and relieve the pressure of business.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You can expand today if you are enthused and positive in your actions, which will be noticed by those who can make your career activities successful. Attend a nice party in the evening with your mate and thereby it can be romantic.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Avoid a stubborn friend today who wastes your time and keeps you from handling important practical affairs in the days ahead. This evening can be good for meeting with close friends and going to recreational location for fun.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A fellow associate will gladly go along with you in some enterprise today, provided you don't call in some expert who has different ideas and procedures. Later this evening will be fun for your loved ones, if you are patient.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Don't run off to new interests today, so that you can build up your public reputation and feel more secure in your business projects. Later this evening make this time good for your loved ones and thereby avoid any difficulties.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

New regulation changes method of awarding tenders to contractors

By Francesca Ciriaci

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Contractors welcomed the enactment of long-awaited new regulations in awarding tenders as "extremely beneficial for private sector development."

According to the new regulations, effective as of May 7, tenders will not be won by the firm presenting the lowest offer, but rather by the offer most approximate to the average of all offers submitted, by a margin of 10 per cent.

If more than one offer falls in this latter category, the tender will be awarded to the firm submitting the lowest offer.

"We have been asking

the government for such new regulations for about 15 years," stated Hosni Abu Ghida, vice president of the Jordan Engineers Association (JEA).

"If there are five offers submitted, the middle price will be taken as the average, and all prices in a 30 per cent around the margin will be added together and the total divided by their number," Mr. Abu Ghida explained. If, for example, after eliminating those offers which fall out of the 30 per cent margin, three out of five offers remain, their total will be divided by three.

"The nearest offer to the average will win the tender," Mr. Abu Ghida continued.

The new regulations were issued by the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

The private sector feels considerably relieved. Prior to the new regulations, engineering and contracting firms with financial difficulties would, in some cases, submit offers below cost in the hope of accessing credit and financial facilities attached to the tender.

In other cases, stronger foreign contractors, eager to enter the Mideast market at any price, would edge out local firms with extremely low offers. Especially European companies see Jordan as a gateway to Iraq.

and are keen on preparing to initiate commercial ties with Baghdad, once the U.N. embargo imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait is lifted.

"With the new regulations, not only the race will be more fair, but also contractors will not be forced to take extra risks," commented Nader Masannat, of Masannat Engineering and Contracting.

"These new regulations apply to most countries and will also help Jordanian consulting firms export their services," said Mr. Abu Ghida.

In neighbouring countries, such as Syria, Mr. Abu Ghida noted, tenders are also awarded to the firm presenting the offer closest to a calculated average.

Two Jordanian banks negotiating merger

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Bank of Jordan and the Jordan Kuwait Bank have reached initial agreement to merge, informed banking sources told Al Ra'i Arabic daily Monday.

Bank of Jordan Chairman Tawfik Fakhouri confirmed that negotiations were still going on between the board of directors of the two banks but that the final decision would be left to the shareholders.

Mr. Fakhouri expected merger procedures to be completed after the general assembly of each bank hold its annual meeting soon.

The chairman told Al Ra'i that the bank has completed the procedures to raise its capital from JD10.5 million to JD20 million. He revealed that the board is recommending the distribution of half a share in stock dividend

for each share equity to increase the capital and the transfer of profits retained earnings.

The Bank of Jordan has generated a pretax net profit of JD6.52 million last year. The amount becomes JD5.07 million after deducting tax. In 1995, the figures were JD4.87 million and JD2.98 million respectively.

Meanwhile, the Amman Financial Market Monday suspended trading in shares of the Middle East Investment Bank as it prepares to raise the capital.

According to Marwan Awad, the general manager of the bank, many Arab and foreign investors have approached the bank to buy a stake in the fresh capital that will be pumped in the bank.

Central bank fears said to hobble gold market

LONDON (R) — Fear of bullion sales by central banks dominated the gold market last year and capped prices as sentiment tottered, according to Gold 1997, a report by Gold Fields Mineral Services Ltd. (GFMS).

GFMS is a London-based commodity research company specialising in analysis of the gold and silver markets. Big mining house Gold Fields of South Africa Ltd owns part of GFMS.

"Central bank gold reserves have come into play for the first time in a generation and not only in the European Union (EU)," GFMS chief executive Stewart Murray said. Gold fabrication demand reached a new high as total consumption hit 3,490 tonnes, outstripping new supply from all sources by about 163 tonnes, according to the report.

This was compiled before news that the world's potentially biggest gold discovery at Busang in Indonesia was a sham.

Total consumption was still 139 tonnes down on the 1995 total, and investors who shied away from gold sold enough of their hoardings to limit the imbalance.

Supplies of newly mined gold rose to 2,346 tonnes from 2,269 in 1995, although the leading producer South Africa mined less than 500 tonnes for the first time in a single year since 1956. Its output was 496 tonnes.

The net result of weak sentiment and investor interest against only a marginal increase in fabrication demand and slightly greater supply was a one per cent rise in the average gold price to \$387.87 per ounce from \$384.05 in 1995.

But the report noted that the sustained rise in the value of the dollar meant gold prices in many other currencies showed substantial year on year rises.

The single most important influence on the price was the role of the official gold holders, it said.

Over 500 tonnes of gold were sold by the Belgian and Dutch central banks between them in the first and fourth quarters of the year, and 14 other central banks added about 88 tonnes of gold sales during the year.

More significant still was the perception that further official destocking was likely from the International Monetary Fund, the Swiss National Bank and any one of several European central banks on the way to European Monetary Union.

"On the other hand...there were also significant purchases of gold by other central banks leaving the net sales for the year at a relatively modest 239 tonnes (against an average net sale of 213 tonnes over the past ten years)," the report said.

Canada sold eight tonnes of gold, the Austrian National Bank sold gold for coin and small bar production at the nation's mint, while one Asian and one Latin America central bank also featured as sellers, the report said.

"We can see sales continuing for the next few years but the market should be able to absorb them as it is in a structured deficit. It needs central bank sales," said Mr. Murray.

Nineteen central banks bought bullion in 1996 totalling 349 tonnes but China and Russia were the most prominent, the GFMS report said.

Both countries' central banks bought gold from local miners but China bought on the international market and Russia bought disbonded gold from private sector banks.

The report noted that central banks were also more active in providing lending and swaps to the market with 64 institutions active by year-end.

"As a result the amount of gold committed in the form of swaps and deposits rose from around 2,440 tonnes at the end of 1995 to 2,750 tonnes at the end of 1996," the report said, with industrialised countries contributing slightly more of the increase than developing countries.

Even so, developing country central banks — despite holding only 17 per cent of officially declared gold reserves — provided more than twice the amount of gold to the market as the developed countries.

Mr. Murray said, "the price weakness since the last quarter of 1996 has been to a large extent the result of poor sentiment stemming above all from fears about the future impact of the official sector on the gold market."

He added that physical demand was supporting the gold price around \$340, but "only time will tell whether this floor can become a foundation for the kind of rally seen in the second quarter of 1993. At this stage all one can say is that the parallels between the state of the market now and then are there to be seen."

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Returns on investments provide large amounts to the profit of Jordan Worsteds Mills Company

** ELEVEN PER cent of profits achieved by the Jordan Worsteds Mills Company came from its investments while nine per cent came from the company's sales which amounted to JD10.29 million last year compared to JD12.35 million during 1995. Exports sales were JD1.73 million and JD4.44 million for 1996 and 1995 respectively.

The company boosted its investments by 10.6 per cent last year to become JD11.05 million. The additional equity was acquired in some public shareholding companies such as Jordan Sulpho Chemicals, El Zay Ready Wear Manufacturing, International Tobacco and Cigarettes, Jordan Electric Power and Al Dawliyah for Hotels and Malls.

Having generated a JD2.45 million net profit, the general assembly authorised distributing dividends at a rate of 20 per cent and allocating 20 per cent of the net profit to voluntary reserves in addition to allocating JD600,000 for a special reserve. Other financial data that appeared in the annual report were JD20.2 million in shareholders' equity which increased by 8.2 per cent over the 1995 total. The current liabilities dropped by 11.1 per cent as the company repaid a good part of its indebtedness towards banks last year.

Board Chairman Youssef Muasher told the general assembly that after installing new machinery the quality of the company's products has improved. He indicated that the company intends to buy additional modern equipment to improve quality to the highest standards (Al Aswaj + Al Dustour).



"When the food stains on your best shirt can feed a starving family for a week, you know you're a slob."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DYADD
 PAUNC
 NIJYET
 COASIF

Print answer here: WITH AN

Yesterday's Jumbles: GRIPE HENCE BRUTAL MUSCLE
 Answer: A pole vaultier must be this to win — UP TO THE CHALLENGE

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SUBSISTANT											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 12/05/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO.	NO. OF	NO. OF	NO. OF	NO. OF	NO. OF	NO. OF	NO. OF
PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE
269.000	213.000	ARAB BANK	11.8	1.56	2	40	10245	256.00	256.25	256.25	256.25
2.100	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	8	7750	13775	1.80	1.77	1.77	1.77
5.500	4.100	CAIRO ARAB BANK	9.6	3.23	1	2000	9300	4.50	4.45	4.45	4.45
3.600	2.760	BANK OF JORDAN	11.0	0.00	4	2090	6370	3.04	3.05	3.05	3.05
5.100	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	13.9	4.16	4	1049	4890	4.75	4.66	4.66	4.66
2.950	2.440	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	18.7	0.00	1	500	1290	2.62	2.58	2.58	2.58
1.050	0.790	JOR. COMM. BANK	14.8	8.75	6	1500	4400	1.80	1.78	1.78	1.78
3.870	3.450	ARAB JOR. DEV. BK.	16.8	0.00	3	3100	10850	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
4.050	3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	14.9	3.28	4	4300	15696	3.68	3.66	3.66	3.66
3.800	3.000	JOR. DEV. BANK	20.7	0.00	3	600	1932	3.30	3.22	3.22	3.22
2.850	1.000	NETT. AL-HAL (BEITRA)	6	15.00	2	300	300	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
1.440	1.000	PHILADEL. DEV. BK.	9	0.00	4	1517	1669	1.14	1.10	1.10	1.10
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 192.75 CHG: -0.25 42 28746 80717											
1.400	1.330	UNIVERSAL INSUR.	9.9	0.00	1	3500	4725	1.33	1.35	1.35	1.35
6.170	3.700	ALYASER AL-ARABI	12.8	0.00	1	100	541	5.70	5.41	5.41	5.41
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 114.60 CHG: -0.71 2 3600 5266											
1.820	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	7.9	6.13	8	15600	25884	1.65	1.63	1.63	1.63
1.480	0.930	KH. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	21	8300	8416	1.04	1.01	1.01	1.01
3.720	2.900	ARAB DEVL. INV. EDUC.	7.9	0.00	2	950	2869	3.02	3.02	3.02	3.02
1.220	0.960	JARNA EDUCATION	9	0.00	2	1550	1504	0.99	0.97	0.97	0.97
2.230	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	7.9	6.63	3	650	1079	1.63	1.66	1.66	1.66
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 104.45 CHG: -0.24 40 27148 40058											
3.800	3.060	JOR. CHEMIST FACT.	25.2	2.94	8	1116	4162	3.74	3.74	3.74	3.74
3.500	2.710	JOR. PROSPERITY KIDNEY	8.8	3.15	4	73617	242853	3.15	3.17	3.17	3.17
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.1	9.46	4	400	9738	9.35	9.40	9.40	9.40
3.260	1.650	INDUSTRIAL CHEM. JAR.	9	0.00	3	344	654	1.94	1.90	1.90	1.90
3.980	3.040	ARAB WHEEL MFG.	9.9	5.59	16	5076	18054	3.56	3.58	3.58	3.58
7.250	5.650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	7.3	2.82	6	26250	186375	7.20	7.10	7.10	7.10
2.570	2.050	JOR. DAILY	17.6	10.86	2	103	232	2.27	2.25	2.25	2.25
2.100	1.430	JOR. PAPER MFG.	17.6	5.63	4	1050	1491	1.43	1.42	1.42	1.42
5.910	4.250	DAR ALDHAIR DEV. INV.	11.5	5.32	1	200	940	4.60	4.70	4.70	4.70
1.950	1.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.0	0.00	12	8611	4478	1.35	1.32	1.32	1.32
1.520	1.010	NATIONAL STREET IND.	9	0.00	1	1250	1371	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10
1.540	1.000	INTERNATIONAL PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	12	4850	3398	0.76	0.74	0.74	0.74
1.150	0.680	JOR. ROPEWORK IND.	9	0.00	4	3150	1956	0.60	0.63	0.63	0.63
3.730	2.130	JOR. CABLE TV. STAC	17.2	0.00	3	400	1133	2.77	2.83	2.83	2.83
1.170	0.570	JOR. SULPHO CHEM.	9	0.00	9	3250	2243	0.70	0.68	0.68	0.68
1.070	1.120	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	18.1	4.93	13	10850	15407	1.43	1.42	1.42	1.42
2.660	1.410	UNIV. HOUS. INDS.	17	0.00	18	6590	9965	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52
1.230	0.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.9	0.00	18	10250	8933	0.88	0.87	0.87	0.87
1.330	1.080	INTEL. TORRADO	27.5	0.00	6	50250	60293	1.17	1.17	1.17	1.17
1.400	0.860	UNION CH. & VHS.	29.1	0.00	1	50	46	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 116.27 CHG: +0.13 151 208817 568555											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 151.84 CHG: -0.10 235 266311 694596											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 12/05/1997											
790	410	JOR. TRADE PAC.	11.7	0.00	12	8600	3784	0.43	0.44	0.44	0.44
1.530	1.050	JARNA FOR INVESTMENT	25.9	0.00	3	20250	29328	1.38	1.31	1.31	1.31
940	560	UNION CH. & VHS.	0.00	0.00	10	30500	8215	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57
810	370	ARAB FIB. INVS.	9	0.00	31	45850	22070	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47
640	200	JOR. ISLAM. MACH. JEMCO	9	0.00	9	9250	2313	0.24	0.25	0.25	0.25
740	510	ARAB FOOD & MFG.	9	0.00	1	50	28	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56
720	490	WALL. TEXTILES	9	0.00	2	450	225	0.51	0.50	0.50	0.50
810	400	WALL. MFG. ENG. MACHICO	9	0.00	107	157650	93489	0.58	0.57	0.57	0.57
970	730	JORDAN PAPER	9	0.00	3	1700	1274	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72
730	600	KIDNEY PEARL. 75%	9	0.00	4	900	342	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.63
1.280	860	UNION TORRADO 75%	9	0.00	8	5700	3524	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86
770	550	WALL. PHARM. 65%	9	0.00	5	7950	4587	0.60	0.61	0.61	0.61
620	390	IND. ENG.	26.5	0.00	4	5250	2293	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43
950	740	IND. CERAMIC	21.2	0.00	2	1000	810	0.83	0.81	0.81	0.81
1.020	590	WALL. POLYESTER	9	0.00	11	32100	22211	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68
1.000	500	WALL. MACHINERY 75%	9	0.00	2	450	270	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60
970	530	WALL. EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	1	450	297	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 151.84 CHG: -0.10 235 266311 694596											

Jazireh continue winning streak with victory over Orthodoxi

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Newly-crowned champions Al Jazireh continued their winning streak and ended their matches in the country's First Division Basketball Championship by beating titleholders Al Orthodoxi 74-67 Sunday night.

The win consolidated Al Jazireh's lead atop the standings after they beat Al Ahli 82-59 Thursday to secure the title for the first time in 33 years.

Since Al Orthodoxi had lost to Al Jazireh and Al Ahli (70-66) in the first round, they will now have to beat Al Ahli with more than four points to secure second place otherwise they will finish third.

In the other match, Al Hussein scored their first win by default after Al Jalil's players failed to show up at the match and according to competition rules lost 20-0.

Al Jazireh's win ended the decades-long dominance of titleholders Al Orthodoxi and all-time rivals Al Ahli over one of the country's most prestigious sports titles leaving the two former champions fighting for second and third places.

Al Jazireh had defeated Al Ahli 85-57 in the first round

and went on to beat Al Orthodoxi 62-54. They maintained their lead atop the standings when Al Orthodoxi lost to Al Ahli 70-66 in the first round.

After coming close to the title in the past two seasons Al Jazireh started this year's competition with a clear determination to clinch the title with their young lineup apparently well-prepared from their participation in the Arab Clubs tournament in Tunisia last month.

The other top two teams — Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi — seemed to have their own shortcomings during the competition and for the first time ended up playing for runner up and third positions.

Although their team had prepared with a series of matches in Syria voicing hope that they would retain their title for the third year running, Al Orthodoxi found themselves in third

place instead of topping the overall standings for the first time in years.

On the other hand, and following their dismal showing against Al Jazireh in the first round, Al Ahli handed their new coach Raffi Cholukyan the reigns taking over from Ghaith Najjar, the head coach for the past two seasons, during which the team was unable to reclaim the title and have been in a slumping form ever since.

With three of Jordan's top players — Naser Bushnaq, Yousef Zaghloul and Marwan Ma'touq — off the team Cholukyan, a former head coach of the Soviet Unions' national teams, has been trying to lift the teams form in trying to end Al Orthodoxi's current two-year reign or maintain an advanced standing.

Al Ahli were previously trained by Ukrainian Alexander Sacha who guided

the team to a 1990 win ending Al Orthodoxi's 1976-1989 reign atop the Kingdom's basketball scene.

Al Ahli went on to win the crown in 1992, 93, 94 before Sacha left his post after apparent differences with the board.

The other teams in the competition are out of the spotlights. Al Jalil's team has disintegrated from one match to another and Al Hussein are playing with no serious goal in mind as no matter what their results they will keep their place in the prestigious group for the coming season after Al Yarmouk were relegated for withdrawing at the beginning of the competition.

Al Ahli will meet Al Orthodoxi in the final match of the competition Wednesday evening at 7:15 p.m. at the Sports Palace.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Jazireh	8	8	-	675	413	16
Ahli	7	5	2	447	382	12
Orthodoxi	7	4	3	568	379	11
Hussein	8	1	7	329	605	9
Jalil	8	1	7	308	548	7
Yarmouk	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Relegated to 2nd Division

Barcelona keep alive double hopes

LONDON (R) — Barcelona's hopes of a Spanish League and European Cup Winners' Cup double stayed alive on Saturday when they defeated arch-rivals Real Madrid in a top-of-the-table clash.

Although the Catalan giants have only a slender chance of edging out Madrid for the title, the result kept them in contention — and boosted their hopes of taking the European trophy from holders Paris St Germain in Rotterdam on Wednesday.

Other weekend highlights from around Europe:

England

English F.A. Cup finalists Middlesbrough and their north-east neighbours Sunderland were both relegated from the Premier League Sunday as Coventry staged another dramatic last-day escape.

Middlesbrough, who play Chelsea in the F.A. Cup final next week, went down after drawing 1-1 at Leeds while Sunderland joined them following their 1-0 defeat at Wimbledon.

Coventry, who won 2-1 at Tottenham, stayed up. It was the 10th time in 30 years Coventry had avoided relegation on the last day of the season.

Newcastle clinched second spot and a place in the expanded European Cup next season after beating already-degraded Nottingham Forest 5-0.

Spain

A solitary goal from Brazilian striker Ronaldo after 40 minutes gave Barcelona a 1-0 win over Real Madrid in a bad-tempered clash which narrowed Real's lead over Barcelona at the top to five points with five matches to play.

Both teams were lucky to end the game with 11 players after a disappointing match which rekindled Barcelona's faint hopes of beating their arch-rivals to the title.

After losing to Real 2-0 earlier in the season, Barcelona will have to take six more points than Real to lift the title. Results of games between teams level on points are used to decide final positions before goal difference. The only goal of the game came after Ronaldo had seen a penalty saved, but he scored after the ball had returned into open play.

Italy

The race for the Italian championship is the closest for years with Juventus just four points ahead of Parma with four matches to play. Juventus beat Verona 2-0 on Sunday while a hat-trick from Argentine Hernan Crespo gave Parma a 3-0 win over Vicenza. Juventus and Parma meet in Turin next Sunday.

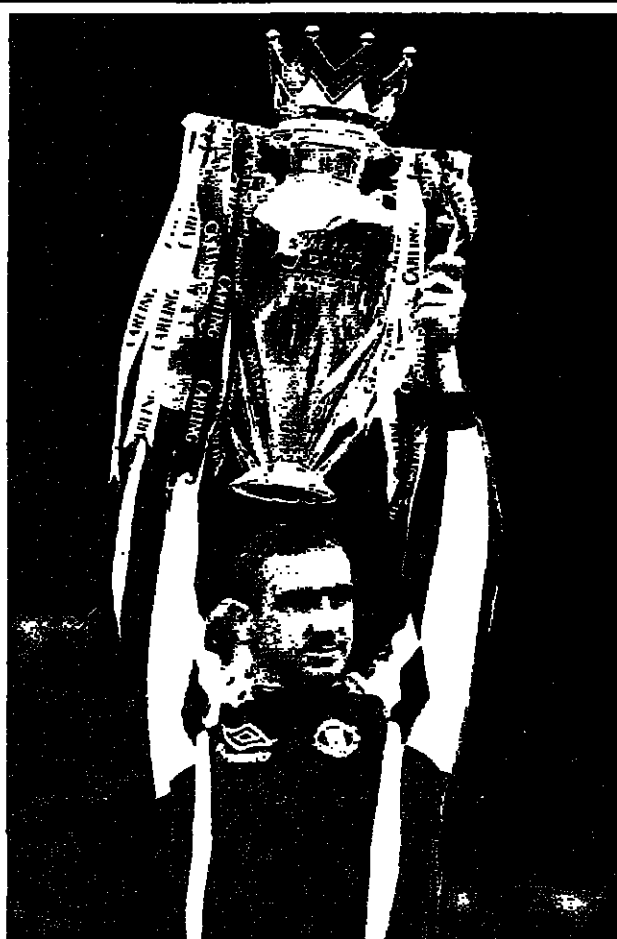
Netherlands

PSV Eindhoven extended their lead at the top of the Dutch league in their search for their 14th title after they beat Groningen 1-0. Second-placed Feyenoord drew 1-1 with Twente Enschede.

PSV won with a long-range 70th minute shot from Stan Valckx, his first goal of the season, while Feyenoord's hopes were dented with Twente's equaliser coming two minutes from time.

France

Nice, already relegated from the French First Division, won the French Cup for the third time in their history but the first since 1954 when they defeated Guingamp 4-3 on



Manchester United captain Eric Cantona holds aloft the Carling F.A. Premiership trophy after the game today against West Ham United. Manchester United have now won the F.A. Carling Premiership four times (Reuters photo)

penalties after the teams had drawn 1-1 after extra time.

Greece

Olympiakos made absolutely certain of their first Greek title for 10 years on Sunday when they beat AEK Athens, their only challengers, 2-0.

Portugal

Brazilian striker Mario Jardel scored twice in Porto's 2-1 home win over Belenenses on Sunday to leave the champions one point short of claiming a record third straight title.

Sporting, who beat Chaves 2-0 at home Sunday, consolidated second place in the championship over their Lisbon rivals Benfica who lost 2-0 away to Maritimo on Saturday.

With four games to go, Porto lead with 76 points, followed by Sporting on 65 and Benfica on 55.

Stoltenberg beats Bjorkman to retain title

CORAL SPRINGS (R) — Fourth seed Jason Stoltenberg of Australia retained his America's red clay tennis championship title against top-seeded Swede Jonas Bjorkman 6-0, 2-6, 7-5 Sunday despite the best slogging efforts of the self-appointed "Jonas Bjorkman trio."

The victory marked the first time that the 32nd-ranked Stoltenberg has successfully defended a title. He has won four tournaments.

Stoltenberg may be the hottest player currently on tour. In the past two weeks he has compiled a win-loss record of 12-2, reaching the semifinals at Orlando two weeks ago and the finals at Atlanta last week.

"It's a great feeling," Stoltenberg said. "I've reached the semis and the finals the last two weeks and to come away from another final with a loss would've been hard to take. Today, I felt like deja vu for me, like I could just do it again here."

The one hour, 44 minute final, played in front of a sparse crowd, had a one hour, 37 minute rain delay with Stoltenberg leading 3-0 in the first set. After play resumed, the conditions were very humid, making the balls and court extremely heavy.

The 23rd-ranked Bjorkman, looking for his second career title, could not find his form in the first set, battling unforced errors into the net or outside the perimeter of the court. The Swede won only five points in his three service games in that set.

But Bjorkman pulled his game together in the second set, and that encouraged three young Swedish fans into vocal action.

The three — all wearing blue shorts and some version of the Swedish national colours, blue and yellow — delighted the crowd with a variety of chants for the remainder of the match, as they had in the semifinal Sunday.

"It was so nice to have the Swedish support away from home," said Bjorkman. "I even think they helped me get the support from the Americans here. This is what tennis needs to make matches more fun. The fans don't have to be that straight any more."

But not even the fans could make him feel at ease against Stoltenberg.

"I didn't feel too comfortable out there today," Bjorkman said.

In the sixth game of the second set, serve let him down as he double faulted twice, including on the final point of the six-point game. Another service break in the eighth game and the match was even at a set point.

The third set went even at 4-4 as each player struggled to take the upper hand.

Stoltenberg finally went ahead with a service break in the ninth game which put him at 5-4 and serving for the match.

The Australian fell apart in the next game, barely keeping a ball in the court. Frustrated at passing up a chance to close out the match, he smacked his racket to the floor and bent down and started yelling at it.

After that atypical outburst of emotion, Stoltenberg won the final eight points of the match in impressive style.



Germany's Michael Schumacher in action during a very rainy Monaco Grand Prix. Schumacher won the race while Brazilian Rubens Barrichello placed second and Eddie Irvine of Great Britain took third (Reuters photo)

Schumacher victory heralds new era for Ferrari

MONTE CARLO (R) — Victory for Michael Schumacher and third place to Eddie Irvine in Sunday's rain-hit Monaco grand prix have ushered in a new era for Ferrari.

For the first time since double world champion Schumacher joined the team after leaving Benetton in 1995, Ferrari took over the leadership of both the Formula One drivers' and constructors' championships.

"This is a beautiful dream for the team," said Ferrari sporting director Jean Todt. "To have both cars on the podium, one first and one third, at Monaco... But I think we still have a long road ahead of us."

"We must celebrate the result, enjoy the moment and then stop dreaming. Once this is over, we have to go testing in Barcelona and back to work."

Despite Todt's caution after seeing his team end a 16-year drought without a Monaco win, it is clear that Ferrari pose a greater threat than at any time since Jody Scheckter of South Africa claimed their last drivers' title in 1979.

Schumacher, the 28-year-old German who lifted the drivers' crown with Benetton in 1994 and 1995, demonstrated why on Sunday with a peerless drive through the rain to

win easily by more than 53 seconds.

He and his team mate Ralf Schumacher, who has reeled off three successive podium finishes, have both praised new technical director Ross Brawn, formerly with Benetton, for the transformation in their fortunes.

Briton Brawn joined the team last December, together with chief designer Rory Byrne, after working with Schumacher during his championship successes at Benetton. According to the German, he has brought a calm and methodical style of management to the team.

"Ross likes to work in a logical way, with a programme, and he does not become emotional when he is in his work," said Schumacher. "This has been a welcome quality for the team."

Schumacher, however, agreed with team chief Todt after Sunday's race when he said he did not think he or Ferrari were yet ready to challenge Williams for the world title.

Looking ahead to the Spanish grand prix at Barcelona in two weeks, he said: "To be honest, I would prefer to cancel Spain. It is not a circuit which suits our car."

"But now that I have opened up a small gap in the championship, I suppose I

can afford to just go for a finish in the points and it will still look good."

"After Spain, though, I think we will be looking reasonably good for the rest of the season. There are some more improvements to come with the car and I am confident about the reliability."

Despite Schumacher's pessimism, he won with Benetton in 1995 and with Ferrari in the wet last year.

While Ferrari celebrated on Sunday night, the Williams team camped from Monaco grim-faced after a disastrous error in weather-forecasting persuaded them to gamble on dry slick tyres and dry set-ups for the wet race.

Both Jacques Villeneuve of Canada and Heinz-Harald Frentzen of Germany failed to finish and the team unexpectedly looked second best in all departments.

"Our choice was based on a forecast of very fine drizzle for the first 20 or 30 minutes of the race," said team boss Frank Williams, who also pointed out that their forecaster had been accurate at all four previous races this year.

"If it had worked this time, we would have been heroes," he added. "But it didn't."

Pierce triumphs in Italian Open

ROME (AFP) — France's Mary Pierce landed her first title in two years here on Sunday, when she beat ailing defending champion Conchita Martinez 6-4, 6-0 at the Italian Open.

The final was literally a pain in the neck for the Spaniard, who tweaked a muscle at 2-2 in the opening set, making it agony to look up or to the right for the rest of the match.

Martinez, who had won this tournament ever year since 1993, had regular physiotherapy around the nape of her neck and the right shoulder blade — but to little real effect.

For Pierce, after defeat in this year's finals at the Australian Open and Amelia Island, it was a morale-boosting first title since 1995.

"I knew what to expect from Conchita, she's a great player, a tough player on clay especially and she's won so many times here in Rome," said the 22-year-old from Montreal.

"But it was easier than I expected, I think because she got a little bit hurt. It made it easier, but at the same time I had to stay concentrated and not make any mistakes that would let her back into the match."

"During the match, I realised at one point that it was the third time this season I was in a final, and I got frightened," she admitted.

"But then I felt her resistance go at 1-0 in the second set and I said to myself 'if I play well, I could win this.'"

Currently ranked 15th in the world, Pierce now has her sights on at claiming back the number five slot which was hers in 1994 and 1995 before a shoulder injury spoiled last year and forced a three-month rest.

"The way I'm playing now I definitely could, and maybe even better," she said.

"But I just go out there to try my best, have fun and enjoy myself. I think that's the

most important thing," she added.

For Spanish tennis fans, it was the second time this week that injury had dashed their hopes of success.

Second seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario had bowed out to Swiss teenager Patty Schnyder after pulling a muscle in her arm in the opening game.

Martinez's injury was diagnosed by a tour medical report as a "cervical muscle spasm."

The Spaniard said: "I don't know what happened, I went for a ball and then when I looked up I felt it go. And from that moment onwards I couldn't use my forearm or serve properly."

"It makes me sad to finish like that, but I'm happy enough with what I've done here this week."

She insisted on later playing the doubles final with Argentine Patricia Tarabini, saying: "You don't serve often in doubles and I don't want to let my partner down."

However, it was a wasted effort as they were beaten 6-2, 6-4 by American Nicole Pietrangeli and Dutchwoman Manon Bollegraf. The treatment for Martinez started in the fifth game after the Spanish third seed had managed to break for a 3-2 lead when Pierce sent a forehand wide.

However, Martinez surrendered her own service in the following game when she netted a backhand and slipped again to trail 3-5.

Pierce netted an easy slice at point blank range for 4-5 but the Canadian-born Frenchwoman broke back immediately to seal the set when Martinez drove a barrelling forehand straight into the net.

Martinez was a shadow of her usual self in the second set.

She was unable to move or strike the ball with any power or conviction, allowing the 10th seed to seal the match to love with precious little resistance after 70 minutes.

DAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "1"

Pierce Brosnan & Linda Hamilton ... in

DANTE'S PARK

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "2"

Johnny Depp...in

NICK OF TIME

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

Keanu Reeves ... in
CHAIN REACTION
Shows: 3:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

Top Disney production

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1"

Winner of 9 Oscars

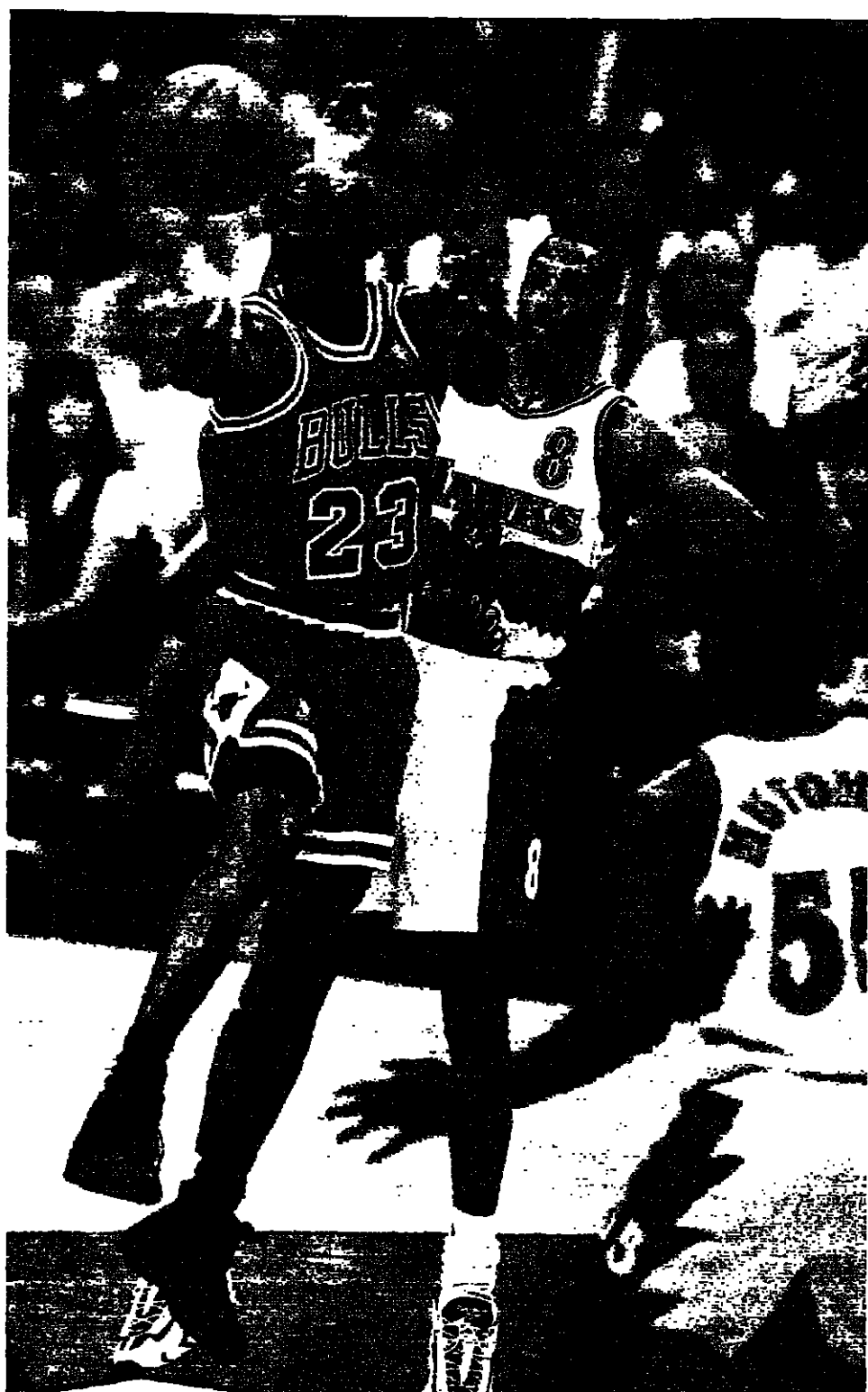
THE ENGLISH PATIENT

Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, 9:00

CONCORD "2"

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre
TEL: 625155

The political satire
AMN YA HO



Chicago Bulls Michael Jordan shoots for two as he pushes the Atlanta Hawks' Steve Smith out of his path in first quarter action in the Eastern Conference semi-finals in Atlanta (Reuters photo)

Rockets beat Sonics in OT, Knicks edge Heat

SEATTLE (R) — Rookie Matt Maloney scored 26 points and his 3-pointer with 36 seconds left in overtime lifted the Houston Rockets to a 110-106 victory over the Seattle SuperSonics Sunday and a commanding 3-1 lead in their Western Conference semi-finals.

In the East, Patrick Ewing had 25 points, 11 rebounds and a key block as the New York Knicks held the Miami Heat scoreless down the final 2:51 for a 77-73 home victory and a 2-1 lead in their best-of-seven series.

The Atlanta Hawks were hosting the defending champion Chicago Bulls, up 2-1 in their Eastern Conference series, in the day's final NBA game.

In a very tight game that saw 21 ties, Maloney's eighth 3-pointer provided the 25th and final lead change, bombing from the top of the key to give Houston a 108-106 lead.

Seattle's David Wingate missed a 3-pointer and Mario Elie made a pair of clutching free throws with 3.2 seconds left.

"It was a big shot," said Maloney, the only NBA rookie to start all 82 games this season. "I was really satisfied with the look and I knocked it down."

"Hakeem (Olujaun) makes a great pass out of a double-team and Maloney made the biggest shot of his life," Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich said.

Charles Barkley had 26 points and 15 rebounds for the Rockets, who improved to 3-0 on the road in the playoffs and can advance to the conference finals for the fourth time in six years with a home win in game 5 on Tuesday. Houston has never defeated Seattle in five previous playoff series.

Barkley scored Houston's first seven points in overtime after missing two free throws with 11 seconds left in regulation that could have sealed it.

"I just blew those," said Barkley. "I just messed up. I felt so bad, I knew I had to do something in overtime. The guys supported me but I just felt like a dog."

Gary Payton had 27 points and 11 assists and Hersey Hawkins added 17 points for defending conference champion Seattle, which is 2-3 in home playoff games and is now on the brink of elimination. The SuperSonics went scoreless in the final 2:25 of game 3 and the last 1:51 of game 4.

"Game 5 is simple," Sonics coach George Karl said. "It's pride and heart. They know us and we know them. It's just playing now."

Neither team got much offense from its key big men. Seattle's Shawn Kemp, averaging 23.1 points per playoff game, scored just 11 before fouling out in the fourth quarter. Olujaun had 11 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists for Houston.

In New York, Ewing atoned for a turnover with his big block of Tim Hardaway's potential game-

tying 3-point attempt.

The Knicks had a 3-point lead and possession when Ewing was double-teamed, lost the ball, recovered it but fell along the sideline with 13 seconds left. After a time-out, Miami worked the ball to Hardaway, but Ewing jumped out and blocked the shot.

Ewing corralled the loose ball and was fouled with 1.8 seconds to go. He let loose with a scream, then made the first free throw to seal New York's fifth win in six postseason games.

The Knicks went up for good at 76-73 on John Starks' three foul shots with 2:42 to go after Voshon Lenard fouled him on a 3-point attempt.

"We played tough defence down the stretch and that's why those free throws made the difference," Starks said.

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Yankees, Orioles win

NEW YORK (R) — The Yankees got their World Series rings, and then David Wells and Mariano Rivera combined on a five-hitter as Bernie Williams had three hits, including a homer for a 3-2 victory over the Kansas City Royals Sunday.

Wells (4-1) tossed seven shutout innings before tiring in the eighth, when Kansas City scored twice. He gave up five hits and a walk with six strikeouts as he won his third straight start — all at Yankee Stadium.

The left-hander gave way with one out in the ninth to Rivera, who walked Jay Bell but got the final two outs for a save in his 10th straight appearance. Rivera has 13 saves, tying Randy Myers of Baltimore for the Major-League lead.

With the help of a caught stealing and a double play, Wells faced the minimum 18 batters through the first six innings.

In a pre-game ceremony, the Yankees received their rings for winning the 1996 World Series.

In Baltimore, B.J. Surhoff homered, tripled and singled while tying a career-high with six RBI as the Orioles defeated the Seattle Mariners 9-5.

In Chicago, Albert Belle went 3-for-3 with his eighth career grand slam and Wilson Alvarez tied a career high with 12 strikeouts as the white Sox handed the Oakland Athletics their season-high fifth straight loss, 8-5.

In Detroit, Tony Clark hit a pair of homers and drove in three runs and Phil Nevin added a solo homer and three RBI to lead the Tigers to an 11-3 victory over the Cleveland Indians.

In Milwaukee, Gerald Williams had three hits, including a home run to lead off the game, and the Brewers scored five runs in the first two innings to defeat the Anaheim Angels 5-2 and complete a sweep of their three-game series.

At Minnesota, Woody Williams allowed two runs in 6 2/3 innings for his first win since last September as the Toronto Blue Jays edged the plummeting Twins 3-2 for their eighth win in nine games.

Computer's chess victory sparks intelligence debate

NEW YORK (R) — The computer's victory over the world's best chess player was a landmark event but it does not solve the argument about its supposed intelligence.

World chess champion Garry Kasparov and the scientists backing up the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue disagreed over whether the system was just a massive calculating machine or a new kind of intelligence.

"Chess is a very simple problem if you compare it with being a medical doctor and the skills that takes, or doing what general Norman Schwartzkopf did in the gulf war," said computing science professor Jonathan Schaeffer of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. "All this is an historical milestone on the way towards building machines that can do intelligent things."

Deep Blue, an IBM rs/6000 parallel processor with specialised microchips for chess, defeated the Russian grandmaster over six games, winning two, drawing three and losing just once. Kasparov is believed to be the best player in the history of an ancient game long considered as the ultimate expression of rational thought.

Chess playing is ideal for computers because the game involves a specific number of physical objects governed by simple, clearly defined rules. The system created history by becoming the first programme to defeat a reigning world champion in a match played under classical chess conditions in which games can last as long as seven hours.

"It is important but it's not going to affect people in their day-to-day life, it's not going to make these images that the science fiction writers portray like Hal in the movie '2001', those days are long way away," said Schaeffer, who led a team that created the world champion checkers computer programme called Chinook.

Other scientists and philosophers who observed the contest, held over nine days in a skyscraper Manhattan office complex, said that while the machine's triumph will not change the world, it could change chess.

"We may learn new strategies for playing chess from powerful calculators like Deep Blue," said professor Monty Newborn of the association for computing and machinery chess project that assisted in the organisation of the \$1.1

million match. "It showed in a couple of these games that it can play in ways that people don't even think of."

Perhaps the most spectacular example of this was in Saturday's fifth game when Deep Blue turned what every human expert believed was a losing position into a coldly calculated, precisely executed draw with the black pieces in a complex endgame.

It calculates at a rate of 200 million moves per second, but it does not have emotions or intuitions about the game it is playing the way that a human does. Kasparov's emotions ultimately let him down because he cracked under the psychological pressure of facing an opponent who was relentless and never tired over several gruelling games.

"There is a tradition of deep fear, not restricted to chess players, that human beings may be unable to control their creations, and particularly their 'thinking creations'," said philosophy professor Timothy McGrew of western Michigan University. "This, I think, is really wide of the mark. It is important to realise that the computer goes about its tasks in a way vastly different from the way a human being does."

The International Business Machines computer scientists who built the machine by combining massive speed with a database of chess knowledge portrayed deep blue as a mere calculator, something Kasparov found difficult to accept in this match and in their first clash in Philadelphia in February 1996.

The question of what defines intelligence is still unsolved by the scientific community and Kasparov falls into the camp of those who believe the net result is what matters.

"You can run an experiment where I'm looking at the position and make a decision based on creativity, intuition, fantasy and a little bit of calculation," Kasparov said. "The machine is looking at the position and making its decision, which is the same, but based purely on calculation."

In the match, the frustrated 34-year-old grandmaster was so unnerved by the computer that he altered his own attacking style to that of a careful, anti-computer strategy. The mistake cost him the contest and he vowed not to play that way again.

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American League

Texas	8	Boston	6
Detroit	11	Cleveland	3
Baltimore	9	Seattle	5
NY Yankees	3	Kansas City	2
White Sox	8	Oakland	5
Milwaukee	5	Anaheim	2
Toronto	3	Minnesota	2

National League

Florida	6	Houston	3
Philadelphia	3	Colorado	1
Atlanta	8	Pittsburgh	2
NY Mets	6	St Louis	4
Montreal	6	Los Angeles	3 (In 10)
San Diego	5	Cincinnati	4 (In 11)
San Francisco	11	Chicago Cubs	5

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Starved civilians flee southern Sudan's Juba

MUGALE, Sudan (AFP) — More than 200 hungry men, women and children fleeing southern Sudan's besieged regional capital of Juba have arrived at Mugale, a displaced people's camp near the Ugandan border.

The weary group, gathered under a tree last week after a two-week trek from Juba, which is under siege by the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) battling Sudanese government troops for the control of southern Sudan.

"I have come to Mugale because of hunger," said Lazarus Kinye.

"All the roads to Juba are closed by the SPLA. Many Arabs (northern Muslims) have already left for Khartoum. We, the blacks are in a worse situation," he added.

The women and children in the group slipped out of Juba city boundaries by telling government soldiers they were going to gather food in the bushes.

The men had to exercise

more caution.

"The government soldiers only let the young ones go," Mr. Kinye explained. The big people (adults) they try and kill."

Mr. Kinye said 155 other people who were in the group walking from Juba were killed in an ambush by the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels who have bases in southern Sudan.

"We met the LRA near Kit. They started shooting at us and some of us were caught and killed with machetes."

The LRA has been operating out of southern Sudan since 1994. Last month, their main camp at Aru, 75 kilometres south of Juba, was overrun by the SPLA.

The bulk of LRA fighters fled to areas held by Sudanese government troops and others scattered into the bush.

"We met the Tong Tong when we were coming. Some of us were cut by machetes and my mother

was killed," Taban Tombe, a six-year-old boy told AFP.

Tong Tong is the term used by the people of southern Sudan to refer to the LRA and literally means one who cuts people to pieces.

Taban said his mother was taking him to Mugale because she had heard of the camp and thought the SPLA would be able to protect them.

The displaced people have so far not been given any assistance. Anthony Okello, the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SSRA) representative in Mugale said the organisation had appealed for help from other non-governmental organisations.

"We at SSRA have nothing to give them," he added. The displaced, meanwhile, have no intention of returning to Juba.

"We don't have any assistance in Mugale. But I will stay here. I will not go back to Juba until the situation has settled," Mr. Kinye said.

Firebomb damages high school for girls in Turkey

IZMIR (AP) — A firebomb caused minor damage at an American-run high school in this Aegean port city Sunday night, police said Monday. No one was injured.

The police launched an operation to catch two men seen escaping on foot after the attack at Izmir American School for Girls, a well-known secondary school educating Turkish pupils with mostly American teachers.

The school had been on a list of targets published by an Islamist militant group.

The firebomb sparked a small fire, which was quickly extinguished.

It was the second attack of a foreign school in Izmir within two weeks. The French-run St. Joseph High School was firebombed on April 30, causing a fire but

no injuries.

No one claimed responsibility for either attack. However, a militant Islamist group announced last year it would bomb foreign schools.

The two schools were on a list published in the weekly magazine Akinci Yolu, the publication of the Islamic Great East Raiders Front.

The group, which aims to form an Islamist state, claimed responsibility for a hand grenade attack at the headquarters of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Istanbul last September.

Tensions have risen recently as the year-old Islamist Welfare Party-led government is being pressured by the secular-minded military to curb Islamisation of society.

Turkey looks to buy natural gas from Iraq

ANKARA (AP) — Energy Minister Recai Kutan said Monday Turkey hoped to buy 10 billion cubic metres of natural gas once a U.N. embargo on the country is lifted.

"We are expecting to sign a deal before the end of the year," Mr. Kutan told reporters.

Mr. Kutan, returned from two days of negotiations in Iraq where he signed a preliminary agreement for Turkey to build a 1,300 kilometre natural gas pipeline. The pipeline would carry the gas to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

Mr. Kutan said natural gas fields at Mansuriyah, some 70 kilometres north of Baghdad, would be developed by a consortium led by the Turkish state-run company Botas, French and

Italian firms were also interested, he said.

"The consortium will be set up as soon as the embargo is lifted," Mr. Kutan said.

Turkey is stepping up efforts to buy natural gas from nearby countries like Iran, Egypt and Yemen to satisfy its rapidly growing needs. Russia is its largest supplier.

The United Nations imposed sanctions on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990. The embargo stays in effect until U.N. inspectors certify that Iraq has destroyed its long-range missiles, chemical and biological weapons.

Iraq is exporting \$2 billion in oil under a six-month oil-for-food deal with the United Nations that is an exemption to the sanctions.

Saudi Arabia beheads 2 Saudis, 1 Bahraini

RIYADH (AP) — Two Saudi men convicted of rape and a Bahraini drug smuggler were beheaded Monday, the government said. Nasser Mughil Amri and Ahmad Uwayd Silti were convicted of breaking into a home, raping a woman and robbing the house, the Interior Ministry said. It did not say when the crime took place but noted that the men had previous criminal records. The two were executed in Medina in western Saudi Arabia. Adnan Mohammad Hussein, a Bahraini, was convicted of smuggling heroin, the statement said. It did not say when or

where Hussein was arrested or the quantity of drugs he was carrying. He was beheaded in the eastern city of Dammam, 400 kilometres northeast of the capital Riyadh. The three executions raise to 30 the number of people beheaded this year in Saudi Arabia. Last year, 71 people were executed. Saudi Arabia's Islamic courts impose capital punishment for rape, murder and crimes that endanger the public. Human rights organisations have criticised the executions, saying defendants often are denied due process and fair trials.

Yemeni public officials to disclose wealth

SANAA (R) — Yemen plans to ask cabinet ministers and heads of government institutions to disclose their personal wealth, the official news agency SABA said late on Saturday.

It said the government had prepared a draft law that would require the officials to "give information on their... holdings in fixed assets such as land and real estate and their local bank accounts, companies they own or participate in and their private cars."

It did not mention foreign bank accounts. The draft legislation, to be submitted to Yemen's newly-elected parliament, also includes provisions for the wives and children of officials to declare their financial status.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh's ruling General People's Congress (GPC) won a landslide victory in the polls last month, seizing 187 of the 301 seats in the parliament.

The Islah Party, the GPC's Islamist junior coalition partner in the outgoing government, won 55 seats and two opposition parties took a total of five seats. Results in two constituencies have yet to be announced.

GPC officials have said that 39 independents had joined the group strengthening its hand in the assembly. The election was Yemen's first general poll since a 1994 civil war nearly tore the impoverished state apart.

In united Yemen's first elections in 1993, the GPC won 123 seats, Islah 62 and the main opposition Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) 56. Independents won 47 seats while the rest went to Baathist and Nasserite parties.

The YSP, some of whose leaders launched a secessionist bid that sparked the civil war, and three other parties boycotted the elections to protest alleged irregularities. The government denied the charges.

In a related development, a Yemeni official welcomed Islah's decision to join the opposition in the new parliament.



U.S. GENERAL RECEIVES MEDAL: His Majesty King Hussein bestows Al Istihqaaq Medal of the First Order upon visiting Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Central Command General Binford Peay on Monday (photo by Yousef 'Allan')

Brother of New York Trade Centre bomber goes on trial

NEW YORK (R) — Jury selection begins on Monday in the trial of a New Jersey man charged with helping his brother escape arrest for his role in the bombing of the World Trade Centre (WTC), officials said.

According to the federal indictment, Mohammad Abu Halima, 33, drove his brother, Mahmoud Abu Halima, to John F. Kennedy International Airport on March 2, 1993, just days after the Feb. 26, 1993, bombing that killed six people and injured more than 1,000.

The Egyptian-born Mohammad Abu Halima, a cab driver who lives in Avenel, New Jersey, with his wife and two children, has pleaded not guilty to the charge before U.S. District Judge Michael Mukasey.

He has been free on bail since his arrest last year. If convicted, he faces up to 15

years in a federal prison. He was previously indicted in August 1993 on the broader charge of seditious conspiracy for the same act, and on charges of participating in a plot to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

But prosecutors decided in a superceding indictment not to pursue the Mubarak charge. Prosecutors have also agreed to drop a second count in the indictment that charges him with lying to the Immigration and Naturalisation Service regarding his application for temporary resident status.

He could be tried later on that count, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney said. Emad Salem, the government's key informant in the trial of cleric Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman and nine others, is expected to testify that Mohammad Abu Halima was aware that his

brother participated in the Trade Centre explosion and helped him escape to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Salem, a shadowy former Egyptian officer, was recruited by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1991 to infiltrate Sheikh Abdul Rahman's inner circle and learn what prosecutors alleged was a massive plot to "wage a war of urban terrorism" in the United States.

Sheikh Abdul Rahman and nine others were found guilty in October 1995 and are serving life sentences. For his testimony during that trial and his work as an undercover informant, Mr. Salem received more than \$1 million from the U.S. government.

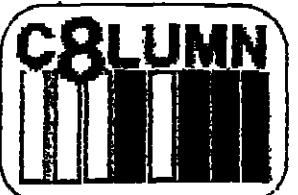
Also expected to testify at Abu Halima's trial is Abdo Mohammad Hajjaj, a former aide to Sheikh Abdul Rahman and a member of his inner circle. Mr. Hajjaj was originally charged, along with the cleric and others, with helping plan the deadly Trade Centre blast and plotting to bomb New York City landmarks and bridges, but he agreed to cooperate with authorities after his 1993 arrest.

Billings, Montana (AP) — Before she spent decades watching chimpanzees in Africa, Jane Goodall observed the behavior of another form of wild animal at close quarters: the hungry human.

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Mahmoud Abu Halima was arrested March 10, 1993, in his native Egypt and convicted in New York in March 1994 with three other militants of planting a 540 kilogramme fertiliser bomb at the WTC in an attack that killed six people and injured more than 1,000. He is serving a 240-year prison sentence.

Mahmoud Abu Halima was an unindicted co-conspirator in the plot to blow up New York City landmarks.



Maryland woman gives birth to second set of triplets

WASHINGTON (R) — Mother's Day was extra special this year for an American woman nursing her second set of newborn triplets. Paula Robinson, 34, had her first set of triplets — two girls and a boy — 12 years ago, and the second set — two boys and a girl — arrived Friday at St. Agnes Hospital in Baltimore. The older children have agreed to help baby-sit. Robinson, who runs a day-care centre, called the babies' arrival "the greatest gift of all." Her second husband, Jeffrey Robinson, says he'll have to work hard to help support the newly doubled family. "We'll make it," he told the network.

Chimp expert began as waitress

Billings, Montana (AP) — Before she spent decades watching chimpanzees in Africa, Jane Goodall observed the behavior of another form of wild animal at close quarters: the hungry human. To pay the fare to the remote site of her first research job, Goodall tied on an apron and took food orders. "I got a job as a waitress and saved my tip money until I could afford to travel to Africa," the 63-year-old Goodall told hundreds of schoolchildren Friday. The animal behavior expert no longer lives among the chimpanzees she studied for 35 years, but she returns several times a year for visits to Tanzania. "I go and sit and they come up and sit beside me and they're thinking, 'Oh, it's her again,'" Goodall said.

Lawsuit filed against actor Dudley Moore

SANTA MONICA (AP) — Dudley Moore's estranged wife filed a \$5 million lawsuit against the entertainer, claiming he terrorised her with beatings and verbal abuse during their five years together. Nicole Moore, 32, claims in the action filed last week that the actor-pianist chased her around the house, hit her, spit in her face, grabbed her by the neck, pushed her against a wall and once choked her. Moore, 61, married his fourth wife on April 16, 1994. He filed for divorce on June 11, 1996, but the action has not been finalised. They have a toddler son. "There will be no comment," said Moore's publicist, Michelle Bega. A month before their wedding, Moore was arrested after his fiancée claimed that he struck her during an argument. She later refused to press charges, however. Moore is best known for playing a lovable alcoholic millionaire in "Arthur."

Pavarotti in London

LONDON (AP) — Luciano Pavarotti returned to the Royal Opera House for the first time in 18 years Sunday, singing to a sell-out crowd of nearly 2,200. The 61-year-old Italian tenor performed excerpts from Puccini's "Tosca," and works by Tosti, Donizetti, Bizet, Schubert, Scarlatti and Beethoven. This was Pavarotti's last appearance before the opera house closes this summer for redevelopment. Among the concert-goers was former Prime Minister John Major, whose conservative party was trounced in British elections May 1. More than 100 opera lovers waited outside, hoping to buy returned tickets. "I've never seen him before, and he's one of the three greatest tenors in the world. I just had to see him," said Phillipa Stone, an opera fan from Essex who waited an hour to buy a ticket.

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